

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_218788

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. *943086/087E* Accession No. *22107*

Author *Dupres. Paul.*

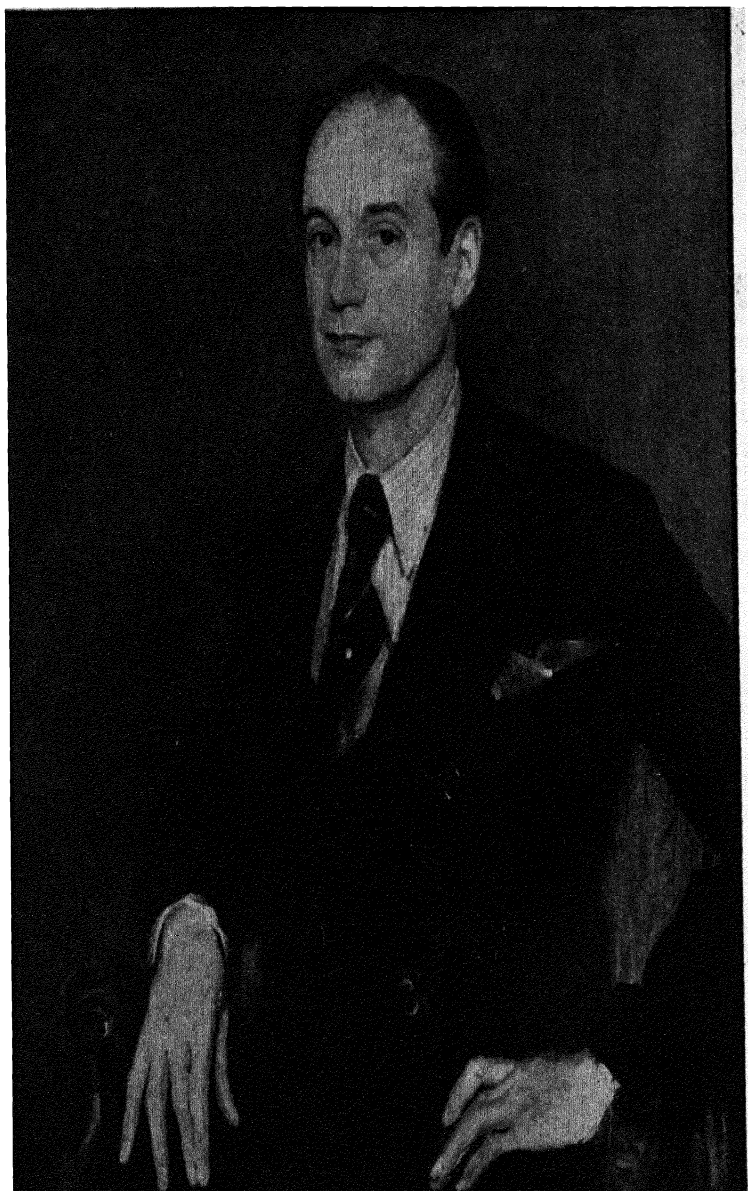
Title *Epic of the Gestapo.*

This book should be returned on or before the date
last marked below. *1940*

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

Also by Sir Paul Dukes

THE STORY OF "S.T. 25"



SIR PAUL DUKES
From the Painting by Flora Lion, R.P.S.

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

THE STORY OF
A STRANGE SEARCH

BY
SIR PAUL DUKES, K.B.E.

With 11 half-tone illustrations



CASELL AND COMPANY LTD.
LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY

FIRST EDITION . AUGUST 1940
SECOND EDITION . SEPTEMBER 1940
THIRD EDITION . NOVEMBER 1940

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED, GATESHEAD ON TYNE

*To the Memory of the
chief character of this
book, who died in a
sporting attempt to
outwit his persecutors*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	PAGE II
PART I		
THE ENIGMA	15
PART II		
THE SOLUTION	107
EPILOGUE	269

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SIR PAUL DUKES, <i>from the portrait by Flora Lion</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Facing page</i>
HITLER'S RECRUITING ENTRY	20
CUTTING FROM "DIE ZEIT"	25
PRAGUE; THE HRADSHIN PALACE	52
MIES; THE MARKET PLACE	52
GOOD KING WENCESLAUS LOOKS OUT	53
THE AUTHOR RETURNING FROM BERLIN	53
MAP OF SUDETENLAND AND THE "PROTECTORATE" OF BOHEMIA	
AND MORAVIA	83
EXHUMATION ORDER	246
THE UNDERTAKER	247
THE AUTHOR AT THE "TATORT"	247
AT THE CEMETERY	254
THE GRAVE OF A SPORTSMAN	254
AUTHOR'S FRONTIER PERMIT FOR THE CZECH PROTECTORATE	255

INTRODUCTION

A word of explanation is needed as to how it became possible to conduct the investigation described in this book.

Despite the antagonism that existed between the Nazi and Bolshevist leaders until August, 1939, I was struck from the outset of the Hitlerian regime by the remarkable similarity of its methods to those of Moscow. In the spring of 1939 I began a study of these resemblances. Somewhat paradoxically, I conducted negotiations at the same time for the publication in Germany of my Russian memoirs in which I strongly criticized the Moscow administration, and assistance was spontaneously offered me in this by the hardy diplomat, Richard von Kuhlmann, who played a prominent part on the German side in the framing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Soviet in 1918. Furthermore, at the suggestion of the Japanese Ambassador in London, M. Shigemitsu, I had a number of conversations with General Oshima, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, on the subject of the Anti-Comintern Pact, of which he was one of the authors.

These circumstances need to be mentioned only because they enabled me, as the reader will easily comprehend, to build up a powerful background as a critic of Bolshevism which, in the then still anti-Bolshevist Germany, obtained for me many facilities from Nazi authorities when my attention became focused upon the investigation which is the subject of this book. (The

parallels which I found so striking between the Nazi and Bolshevist regimes I naturally kept to myself. I have very briefly summarized them in the last chapter.)

The need for this background will be appreciated when I anticipate my story to the extent of stating that the investigation involved challenging the Gestapo on their own ground in the determination to elucidate the mysterious disappearance of a man whom I suspected the Gestapo of having murdered. I found him when I made them dig him up out of six feet of soil. I must not anticipate the verdict, which the reader will find in the story of my search.

The whole fabric of my favoured position collapsed on the day when the Nazis announced to a perplexed and astonished world their pact of friendship with the Bolsheviks. From that moment onward, by incongruous irony, I found myself, as a known critic of Bolshevism, liable to be regarded as *persona non grata* by the Nazi authorities for the very reason that I had hitherto been *persona grata*! By the courtesy of the British Ambassador, who allowed me to return from Berlin in his special aeroplane, I managed to get out of Germany in time, on the day before the invasion of Poland.

To avoid misunderstanding, however, I must add that the operations here described were quite private and no British authorities were in any way connected with them.

This book is published with the knowledge and consent of the nearest relatives of the gentleman who is its central figure. For obvious reasons I have changed his name. As for the other *dramatis personæ*, I see no reason to give unasked publicity in an unpleasant affair to people who, though belonging to the enemy's camp, did me no harm and sometimes aided me. I have therefore

INTRODUCTION

adopted pseudonyms for most of the persons, though leaving other circumstances intact. Those who were avowed anti-Nazis, however, are more effectively camouflaged.

In conclusion, I accept sole responsibility for everything described and all opinions expressed. From the moment that I undertook the investigation it was impossible for the relatives to be in any way involved in it due to difficulties of communication, and I was able to acquaint them with its details only when it was completed. I believe the facts of the case to be as hereafter stated, but this account is written without prejudice to any modification of my own or the Nazi official verdict which may ensue upon supplementary information, should such come to light at a later date.

PART I

THE ENIGMA

I

It is a superb summer day. The second of June, 1939. Berlin is *en fête*—to order, of course. Prince Paul of Yugoslavia has arrived to pay a five-day ceremonial visit to Hitler. The capital is beflagged, all shops are closed, all business stopped except restaurants. Serried ranks of labour battalions and school children trudge, singing, towards their allotted points. Berliners are a bit tired of these never-ending celebrations, which are necessarily of a sameness and dislocate normal life. Certainly *I* am, for they are most inconvenient when you want to call on people. This is not the first time recently that I have had the ill-luck to arrive in the capital, as I did yesterday, on the same day as some potentate for whom the city is bedecked, a bank holiday proclaimed, with the populace willy-nilly thronging the streets: last time I turned up on the same day as Count Ciano who had come to sign the Axis military alliance. Ciano and his suite stayed at the Adlon too, and I bumped into him when I came down the stairs just as he emerged round the corner from the lift. The swarm of monocled German and Italian staff officers clicking their heels in the hall glared daggers at the clumsy Britisher. But how was I to know Ciano was just there? I of course apologized, and the Count nodded charmingly, and everything was all right. Indeed, it being an ill wind, etc., the little contretemps secured me a front place in the parades in his honour.

But imposing though Count Ciano's reception had been, it paled into nothingness by comparison with that

accorded to Prince Paul of Yugoslavia. Nor was this merely because Prince Paul was the acting head of a state whereas Ciano was only a plenipotentiary. It went deeper than that. Germany—or rather, Hitler—was very, very concerned to win over the hesitating Yugoslavia to partnership in the Anti-Comintern Pact. The Muscovite “Jew-ridden gang of world conspirators”, as Hitler still regarded them, were to have another nation added to the list of their declared foes. The prospects seemed promising. The late King Alexander of Yugoslavia, assassinated at Marseilles in 1934, had been one of the most implacable and uncompromising foes of Soviet Russia. And if, as events proved, all the Führer’s blandishments were of no avail, it is said to have been due mainly to the tact and intelligence of Prince Paul’s highly gifted wife, Princess Olga, who with unerring adroitness parried every diplomatic thrust and avoided every pitfall placed in the way by the wily and pressing Führer. For Hitler, with all his supposed asceticism, has always been oddly susceptible to the influence of women.

But meanwhile, the reception to the princely couple was to outdo in its magnificence even that to Mussolini. Its principal feature was to be a vast display of military might. The parade of engines of war, including new tanks of a type not before seen, extended miles along the decorated avenue from the Brandenburg Tor to Charlottenburg, where the royal visitors occupied the Castle Bellevue. The sky was thick with squadrons of roaring warplanes flying the whole length of Berlin from the ex-Kaiser’s palace along Unter den Linden and the Charlottenburg Chaussée and returning in a semicircle to repeat the flight so that the parade should be continuous.

The noise was deafening. To escape it I made my

way in the opposite direction until I came to the Schlossplatz. Here I sat down under the awning of a little café to beer and contemplation. The huge bulk of the Neptune fountain spouted its water jets in the middle of the square while children played in its basins, and beyond it the rear façade of the ex-Kaiser's palace, now somewhat shabby, formed a partial screen from the noise of the low-flying planes.

As I ordered myself a large Pilsener I looked up at the vast mass of the empty palace. To-day it was closed. No visitors would be trooped through its rooms and halls. They would be silent and deserted but for the lingering ghosts of the past. For a moment I saw clearly in my mind's eye the Kaiser's study and his large carved desk, on which there is now an engraved plate saying: "At this desk Kaiser Wilhelm II signed the order for general mobilization on the 1st of August, 1914." That desk—did you know this?—was made of oak taken from H.M.S. *Victory*, presented to the Kaiser, if I remember rightly, by King Edward VII; and as Wilhelm II, after signing the mobilization order, laid aside his pen his eyes can hardly have failed to fall upon the famous signal, inset in little enamel flags across the front of the desk: "England expects that every man will do his duty." Is there in all history a starker instance of fate defied? Did the Kaiser say to himself, even as his pen scratched the paper, "England will not fight—when she says she will she doesn't mean it"? I often wonder whether the bitterest of all his regrets may not be the memory of *that* moment—that before he dipped his pen in the ink his eye did not halt upon that little row of flags: and that, recalling the end of him against whom Nelson had hoisted that signal, instead of tearing up the "scrap of paper"

guaranteeing the integrity of Belgium, he did not stay his hand even then and tear up the mobilization order lying before him.

Little thought the Kaiser, as he thus signed his own doom, that an unsuccessful Austrian painter whose hobby was politics, hailing from the insignificant town of Braunau and barely able to make ends meet by odd jobs at Munich, was at that moment following the imperial decisions with more than bated breath, fearful lest the Emperor should not take the fateful step, and hurrying, when it was taken, a few days later—on the 16th to be precise—to join the German Army as a volunteer. Little thought the Kaiser (or anyone else, for that matter) that the said unsuccessful craftsman and amateur politician would one day sit in the imperial seat, the unchallenged head of the German State, while the Kaiser pined in

Hitler's Recruiting Entry in 1914

1. Christian and Surname:

Adolf Hitler

Born *20th April 1889*

at *Braunau-on-Inn*

District *Braunau*

State *Upper Austria*

2. Rank or Profession: *Painter*

3. Religion: *Cath.*

4. Whether married: *bachelor*

Children:

5. Date and form of service entry:

16.8.14 as volunteer

6. Military unit (giving company, squadron, battery):

Reg. O. VI./E.D./2.I.R.

Nationale des Buchinhabers.

1. Vor- und Familiennamen:

Adolf Hitler

Geboren am *20.* ten *April* 18*89*.

zu *Braunau a. Inn*

Verwaltungsbezirk *Braunau*

Bundesstaat: *Oberösterreich*

2. Stand oder Gewerbe: *Küchenwaser*

3. Religion: *kath.*

4. Ob verheiratet: *Nein*

Kinder:

5. Datum und Art des Dienst Eintritts:

16. 8. 14. a. Kriegs Freiwilliger

6. Bei welchem Truppenteil (unter Angabe der Kompanie, Eskadron, Batterie):

Reg. D. II. / E. D. / 2. J. R.

exile. And little thought the amateur politician himself that twenty-five years after the prosaic "16.8.14" marked in his recruiting entry, he, as Führer and Chancellor of the Third Reich, would be faced with exactly the same decision of war or peace for the world as his erstwhile imperial predecessor.

Would he make the same fatal error? Oh, that he would seat himself at the ex-Kaiser's desk and fix his eyes upon that little row of flags! Would he heed its warning? Or would he, too, with that incredible faculty for self-delusion which stamps the German politician, denying the lesson of history, say within himself: "Nonsense, Nelson didn't mean it!"—and sign an order as fatal as the Kaiser's?

Alas for the world, that is precisely what he did do, fourteen days after the twenty-fifth anniversary of that prosaic "16.8.14."

But three months were yet to elapse ere this occurred when I sat speculating upon these possibilities, drinking beer in the Schlossplatz on the 2nd of June, 1939, while the warplanes in the hot sky thundered into alignment and droned away into the distance.

Sweltering beneath the awning, I brushed my unprofitable speculations aside. For I had other things to think of. My mind was set not upon politics as I ordered myself another Pilsener. It was set upon something seemingly trivial by comparison and far removed from the pomp and display of Berlin. Yet for me very urgent. Turning from planes, palaces, and parades, I opened a newspaper and spread it on the table. It contained a notice which was of profound interest to me. But it was not a Berlin newspaper, nor did it bear the date 2nd of June or contain any reference to the showy event taking place near at

hand. It was a small provincial newspaper called *Die Zeit* ("Time"), published at a small provincial town called Reichenberg, in Sudetenland, which until October, 1938, had belonged to Czechoslovakia and was now situated about fifteen miles from the frontier of the new Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

The newspaper was six weeks old, and bore the date Monday, 17th April, 1939. Though only a provincial daily it was nevertheless a publication of some importance, being, as its sub-title announced, the "Official Journal of the NSDAP (National Socialist German Labour Party) of the Province of Sudetenland." ("NSDAP" is the abbreviation from which the more familiar term "Nazi" derives).

This issue of Monday, 17th April, contained fourteen pages. The front ones were devoted to official announcements and news (that meant propaganda), but on page four there began a chronicle of items of local interest from various parts of Sudetenland. Toward the end of this chronicle was a brief insertion which had greater interest for me at that moment than Prince Paul or the Führer's speeches or all the military parades in the world. The information contained in it was said to come from a tiny place called Mies, in western Sudetenland. It ran:

Suicide of a Man from Prague.

MIES

A thirteen-year-old boy found on the railway line near Tuschkau the completely unrecognizable corpse of a man. The body was mutilated beyond recognition and the right hand was missing. The police pronounced a verdict of suicide. From papers found on the body it appeared that the individual was one Friedrich Schweigler of Prague.



Die Zeit

Amtliche Tageszeitung der NSDAP Gau Sudetenland

Montag, 17. April 1939

Verantwortlich: Maximal 20.000 (einschließlich 10 Rpf. Betriebskosten) von Zeitungen. Durch die Post 20.000 (einschließlich 10 Rpf. Betriebskosten) (einschließlich 10 Rpf. Betriebskosten). Zeitungsstellen mit Ausnahme der Zeitungen, die durch andere Gassen nicht zum Verkauf auf den Verkauf der Zeitungsstellen aber auf Verlangen.

...es an ... können. Die
offizielle Beleuchtung der Burg und der
bernen Baudenkmale findet zu Ehren des
Führers an seinem Geburtslage statt.

Ein Prager begeht in Tuschlau Selbstmord. M i e s. Ein dreizehnjähriger Bursche fand auf dem Bahndamme gegen Tuschlau die vollständig unkenntliche Leiche eines Mannes. Der Körper war bis zur Unkenntlichkeit verstümmelt, der Kopf vollkommen zertrümmert und die rechte Hand fehlte. Die Polizei stellte Selbstmord fest. Aus den bei der Leiche vorgefundenen Papieren konnte festgestellt werden, daß es sich um einen Mann namens Friedrich Schweigler aus Prag handelte.

Wieder Zusammenstoß an der Miesabrücke. M i e s. Auf der Miesabrücke im Bräu... in Mies, einer äußerst... wiederholt schme... einen ein...

hau... Bälle, hatte, trugen ten & diese zu gieren Staa u. a. R ö

Over and over again I read this paragraph, weighing every word. It seemed to me to be untrue, a false report, put out as a blind—or as a bait—yes, more likely as a bait. If it was wanted deliberately to spread this information in order to delude, was not this exactly how it would be worded? Vague—undated—body found “by a boy”—and especially the double insistence on the *unrecognizability* of the body! And then, look, “the right hand

was missing"—of course, the hand on which he wore his ring!

A bait—that was what it must be, I decided. Thrown out to see what reactions it might provoke, so that others might tumble into a net! I should have to walk warily. So far there had been no reaction—obviously—for the paper was already six weeks old. Now I must react, urgently, to this announcement. To me it was startling news.

I looked up, wondering how I should begin. War-planes still droned in the shimmering summer air. Guns were being fired away there at Charlottenburg. Brigades of youth were marching by, singing:

*Heute gehört uns Deutschland
Und morgen die ganze Welt. . . .*

(Germany now and to-morrow the world
Are ours, ours, ours. . . .)

The young people were taught to believe this. But the burgher looked on more indifferently. The barman who brought me another tankard of Pilsener only looked up at the aeroplanes and said, "What a devil of a row they make!" Within the houses were many trying to do a day's work unmolested.

I nodded acknowledgement and returned to my newspaper and my speculations. If anyone finding me there thus engrossed had asked me: "But who was this Friedrich Schweigler who is reported to have committed suicide? What is he to you? Why of such moment? What do you know about him?"—all I could have answered was, ludicrously, "Friedrich Schweigler was a tailor"—a tailor with a name as ordinary as, say, Fred Swift, and supposed to have come, say, from Birmingham.

And had it been asked: "A tailor? Can a tailor matter so much?" then I might perhaps have retorted, "Wasn't Hitler once a house-painter?" and changed the subject quickly. I should not have wanted to discuss the personality of Friedrich Schweigler with anyone. For I had good reason to suspect that Friedrich Schweigler, tailor, was not a tailor at all, nor was his name Friedrich Schweigler, but that he was a totally different person, a person who at that moment interested me very deeply indeed. Moreover, if it was really true that he was dead, I suspected that he had not died by his own hand as stated, but that he had been murdered by the German secret police. And I was determined to find this out, and if necessary charge them with it.

II

AND now to go back to the beginning.

One afternoon, some weeks after the seizure of Prague by Hitler in March, 1939, I was walking along Pall Mall when I ran into a friend of German origin who once had big industrial interests in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. He settled in England some years ago—one of those sturdy ex-German citizens whom England is certainly the richer for having adopted.

"Hullo," he said (from his speech you could hardly tell he was not English), "I've been trying to get you on the 'phone all day. I want to consult you about something urgent. Will you come in and have a drink?"

We went into his club and found a secluded corner in the lounge. He came to the point at once. He wanted to know if I could recommend someone who could be sent to Germany and Czechoslovakia—or what used to be Czechoslovakia—on what he called "a curious and very ticklish mission." It was a private matter, he said, but might have wide repercussions. In any case, large sums of money were involved—several times six figures. "Forgive me," he went on, "if I do not go into full details at once, but there happen to be others already on the job. If they succeed then nothing need come of this request. But the point is"—he leant over to me to emphasize his words—"the point is that I don't believe the people now on the job *will* succeed, although they seem to have the qualifications. One of them is even a high person in the Nazi party."

"A German, then?"

"An Austrian. A Viennese lawyer. But probably a rascal. And a coward. He will be afraid for his position if not for his skin. Another is a Czech lawyer in Prague . . . But it isn't lawyers who will solve the problem in hand," he added.

He paused. I felt he wanted me to facilitate his explanations by asking questions. But I always prefer not to counterquestion when it appears to be precisely the design of the other party to provoke inquiry. So I did not react, and finally he said with a touch of irritation: "Well?"

" 'Well' what? "

"Do you know anyone? "

"To outdo your rascal Nazi lawyer? "

"Yes."

"No."

This wasn't getting along very well.

"You're not very helpful," he observed.

"How can I be?" I retorted. "I don't even know what you're talking about. You've got a Nazi lawyer 'with all the qualifications' on the job—whatever the damn job is. I haven't the ghost of an idea what you're talking about."

My friend is a patient man. He overlooked my rudeness. He is also a very intelligent and subtle man. He called for two more sherries, leaned back in his chair and blew smoke at the ceiling.

"We want an Englishman, not a German," he said quietly. "No Nazi can be trusted, and all other Germans are afraid. But the British have prestige in Germany however much the Nazis hate them. An Englishman is what we want—one who knows German and Germany.

Not a rascal, not a coward, and the last thing we want is a lawyer."

"‘We’?"

"Several people are concerned in the matter."

"Why did you put your Nazi lawyer on the job?"

"He offered to help; we had no alternative at the moment, and the matter was desperately urgent."

"That was——"

"A week ago."

I had to go off to an appointment. "I'll think about it," I said. "You want an Englishman who knows German. He mustn't be a rascal and above all he mustn't be a lawyer."

"No; above all he mustn't be afraid of the Gestapo," he said, as we parted in Pall Mall.

I walked along to my club in St. James's Street. Mustn't be afraid of the Gestapo? What could it all be about? I should have been glad to do my friend a service by finding someone for him. I had to go to Berlin at the end of the month and I thought I might perhaps find somebody among Britishers there to help him if his Nazi lawyer proved, as he feared, to be a wash-out and he had found no one else.

Thereafter I was away for a few days in the country. When I returned I found awaiting me a letter from Prague. It was a private letter from a personal friend—or so anyone, and certainly the German officials who had opened it, would have thought. But this letter, and certain events in London which ensued from it but which do not concern this narrative, had the effect of prompting me not only to expedite my journey to Berlin but to consider subsequently going on to the new Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. A pretext would be essential, for

the German-Czech frontier, the letter said, was *fest geschlossen*—tightly closed. I had a pretext, but the more pretexts I had the better.

However, I could do nothing about the matter for the moment, for I was scheduled to do a television broadcast at Alexandra Palace on April 26th which required some preparation. So I was tied up until that was over. But on the 27th I rang up my friend at his Pall Mall office.

"What about your Nazi lawyer, has he got on with that mysterious job of yours?"

"Not at all. Have you found me anyone yet?"

"Perhaps . . ."

I went round to his office, thinking: "But I *must* know what he is talking about first."

"Look here," I said, when the doors were shut and he had told his secretary to refuse all telephone calls, "I have a fellow in mind, but how the devil can I suggest a job to him when all I can tell him about it is that he mustn't be a lawyer and must grin at the Gestapo?"

He laughed. "Very natural. But would you mind telling me whom you have in mind?"

"Well, would *I* do?"

"You mean it?"

"Well, I'm not a lawyer, judge for yourself whether I'm a rascal, and as for the Gestapo I'll try——"

I was going to say I couldn't guarantee always to smile in the face of the Gestapo, but would do my best. But he interrupted me.

"We hoped you would do it, but we didn't like to ask outright," he said, betraying a trace of excitement in his usually imperturbable manner. "Now I'll tell you the whole affair—in so far as we know anything about it.

The trouble is we ourselves know very little. Have you ever heard the name ——?”

The name he mentioned was that of a certain Czech gentleman whose connexions in various branches of industry were chiefly with Great Britain. Instead of his real name I will use the following: “Alfred Obry.”

My friend explained that he himself had been related to Alfred Obry by marriage, and his other relatives and business friends had entrusted to him the matter he was about to lay before me.

Obry, he said, was a man of over sixty years of age, but twenty years younger in spirit, robust, adventurous, and a sportsman. He had been a crack horseman in his youth, still had a passion for riding, and intended to keep his own stud in England. At the time of the German occupation of Prague he was at Brünn, the second largest city of Czechoslovakia and the chief industrial centre of the country. He had fallen foul of the Nazis, for he had been engaged in completing certain large export transactions to Great Britain on which the Nazi Government laid an embargo. The real cause of the dispute was that the Nazis coveted the huge enterprises in which he had a controlling interest and wanted to force him to sign them away. He was put under house arrest, his passport was taken from him, and he was ordered to report daily to the police. His known anti-Nazi sentiments on the one hand, and the importance to the Germans of his enterprises on the other, made it inevitable that he would be imprisoned on the first pretext and compelled under threats to sign away all he possessed. But he was not the sort of man to take that lying down. He resolved to cheat the invaders. He would outdo them by subterfuge. He would obtain a false passport in another name, and with this he would

take flight. Disguised as a humble artisan, he would travel through Germany itself and find his way to England.

This plot was known to members of his family who, more fortunate than he in not being supervised by the police, had been able, though not without adventure, to flee from the country within a few days after the occupation. They had safely reached England, where they awaited in the keenest anxiety the arrival of Obry himself. He had intended to put his design into execution during the Easter holidays when he hoped police supervision might be somewhat relaxed. Good Friday would be on April 7th, so he would have over a week after the flight of his family to obtain a false passport and prepare his disguise. This he hoped to do by heavily bribing through third parties certain officials of the Gestapo.

Easter came, and the family in London waited in trepidation for news. The first telegram should have come from Switzerland after he had safely crossed German territory. But Easter passed, and the days went on passing, and no news was received. For three weeks after their own flight the family had no information from Czechoslovakia beyond very unsatisfactory telephonic communications with friends in Prague. These people were terrified to say anything, even if they knew, because every word was recorded by the Gestapo. Anxiety became extreme.

Then, about the middle of April, a perplexing and perturbing letter was received from Paris containing a message from an elderly Czech lady whose name I will give as Madame Prosser, a person quite unknown to the Obry family. The message was vague and confused, due to the fact that the writer, Madame Prosser's niece, was

transmitting at second hand the indistinct narrative of an old lady of over seventy years of age who was greatly shaken by her journey from Czechoslovakia and the experiences she had undergone, and who therefore might easily have got things mixed up. But in so far as the letter was intelligible it was to the effect that the writer's aunt, Madame Prosser, had left Prague at Easter, had crossed through Germany from Pilsen to Basle and eventually arrived in Paris. In the train from Prague she had encountered a gentleman whose passport bore a German name which she couldn't clearly remember and who was supposed to be a tailor, but who had confided to her on the journey that he was really someone quite different, that he was, in fact, Alfred Obry, travelling with false papers. He was very afraid these might be detected, and if they were it would have terrible consequences for him. If this disaster should happen, he begged Madame Prosser upon her arrival in Paris to communicate with his relatives in London whose address he gave her. It appeared further from this message that, as things turned out, all the passengers in the train had been arrested, including Madame Prosser herself. They had been taken to the Gestapo at a little provincial town called Mies, in Sudetenland, where they were all subjected to cross-examination. She herself had eventually been released after satisfactory information about her had been received from Prague, and she was allowed to proceed on her journey. Another gentleman, with a Polish name, who was arrested at the same time, was released with her. But Alfred Obry had not been released. She added that the Commissar of the Gestapo (whose name I will transcribe as Neumann) had been very polite to her, though strict in the execution of his duties.

"And that is all we know," my friend concluded. "Madame Prosser has now left the place from which she wrote in Paris without leaving any forwarding address. From the Polish gentleman we never heard anything at all. If Obry asked him to communicate too, he has not done so."

"So the job is to find Obry?"

"Exactly."

It was an exciting problem. The implications were clear. To search for him under his own name would obviously endanger him if he were still passing under his assumed one, while to search for him under his fictitious name (provided one knew it) would be fraught with many difficulties; reasons would have to be given to the Nazi authorities for displaying interest in the lot of an obscure travelling tailor, and it would also be essential to know what background he had built up to support his false identity.

"Have you no idea what the false name was he was using?"

"We can only guess. There has been one more mysterious communication. This arrived yesterday." My friend handed me a telegram. It had been sent from Prague and bore the date April 24th. It was written in German, was unsigned, and was addressed to certain persons at a town in Switzerland, who, he explained, were relatives of Obry's to whom he should have first gone if he had successfully escaped. "They posted it on to us," he added, "because the telegram was a complete mystery to them."

I took it and read it out. "*Friedrich Schweigler am sechzehnten weiter gereist suchet ihn Basel.*" 'Friedrich Schweigler continued journey on sixteenth look for him

at Basle.' Friedrich Schweigler? Is that the name he was using?"

They could only suppose so, my friend said, as otherwise the telegram was unintelligible. It was a mystery anyway, for they had no idea who had sent it. Also it was from Prague, whereas Madame Prosser had stated that Obry had been arrested at Mies on the German side of the frontier. Had he, then, been taken back to Prague? If so, why had his remaining relatives and friends heard nothing? Was he still keeping up his fictitious personality? Yet the telegram was obviously from somebody who knew or had found out his destination in Switzerland and who also knew his pseudonym. Was it possible that he had sent it off himself, saying he had "continued his journey" a week before with the aim of deceiving the authorities? But if he could send a telegram why couldn't he communicate with other people? The Swiss relatives had, of course, made every inquiry at Basle but without result. Meanwhile the London relatives had got through on the telephone to his solicitor at Prague, and a letter had been received from another relative still in Czechoslovakia, but it contained no clue to the telegram and the solicitor apparently knew nothing of it. "But, of course, nothing can be said over the telephone and nothing written in letters. Every letter is opened and every international telephone call listened to."

I sat back to think about the whole affair for a few moments. The more I thought about it the more it appealed to me.

"What do *you* think has happened to him?" I asked.

"I believe he must have been caught and put in a concentration camp."

"From which you want me to rescue him and smuggle him out of Germany?"

"Exactly. . . . If he is still alive, of course. . . . Well? Do you take it on?"

I hesitated. "What about that Nazi lawyer fellow you spoke of? Where does he come in?"

"He was here in London when we got the letter from Madame Prosser. He knew the Obry family, and although he is a Nazi he agreed to investigate and get Alfred liberated. He could probably have done it if he really tried—but I don't trust him."

Neither did I, although I had never met him. If he was a powerful Nazi and in three weeks had done nothing in the matter it meant either that he had no intention of doing anything or was afraid to.

Well, the upshot finally was that I agreed to take on the job on condition that the Nazi lawyer was completely out of it. To get him out of the business was a delicate matter, however. For to tell him outright to have nothing more to do with it, or that it had been put in other hands, would obviously be to make a dangerous enemy; the only thing to do was to discourage him, suggest that it was useless to proceed with the inquiry, that it would be too risky, too costly, and so on.

That evening my friend furnished me with a small photograph of the missing man and a list of some twenty names of people in Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Brünn, Bratislava and other places who knew him. It was thought that to some of these Obry might have confided his intentions, and from some of them I might be able to obtain money to bribe officials and guards and provide for his escape. I undertook, if I found him alive, to get him out over the frontier myself.

Next morning I brought back another list of twenty names. They were the same names transformed in such a way as to be unrecognizable yet easily remembered. This was necessary for correspondence or telephone calls or notes. Some of these names I use in this book.

"And you," I added, "are henceforth 'Mr. Weir'."

On the way to Berlin, looking down from the aeroplane over the cloud-swept waves of the North Sea, I reviewed the peculiar case. Had I perhaps accepted a fool's errand? I had undertaken to search for and, if possible, rescue a man I didn't know and had never seen, one of thousands of victims of Nazi terror, who had disappeared in mysterious circumstances after having seriously offended against the implacable Nazi administration. First he appeared, so far as I could judge from what had been told me, to have circumvented the economic embargo; then he had broken the bounds of police supervision; next he had falsified his passport, and finally fled in disguise. It seemed a pretty damning case!

I could not but admire the pluck of a man of his age in undertaking so parlous a venture as flight in disguise. But what was my position in setting out to search for him?—an Englishman advancing to beard the Gestapo at a time when the very name of England was anathema to a Nazi! You had but to open any German paper on any day at any page to be submerged in a deluge of unbridled abuse and vitriolic sarcasm levelled at Germany's "arch-enemy", led by the arch-hypocrite Chamberlain, who was resolved at all costs to thwart the harassed and maltreated German people in their legitimate aspirations.

The prospect of braving the Gestapo in these circumstances was anything but alluring. Moreover, what data

had I to go upon? Only the scantiest. A vague and confused message said to originate from an old lady of seventy who asserted that she had travelled with the missing man from Prague at Easter, about the 9th or 10th of April, and that she had been arrested with him and then released. But thereupon the said (very nebulous) old lady had promptly vanished from view. She had departed from the address from which she had written, leaving no further trace of herself!

This—and an anonymous telegram from Prague to Switzerland dated April 24th saying that somebody called “Friedrich Schweigler” had “continued his journey” on the 16th—was all I had to work on.

Assuming for the moment that this evidence was valid, it appeared that Alfred Obry, disguised as Friedrich Schweigler and purporting to be a tailor, had left Prague about Easter, had been arrested in the train, taken to the Gestapo at a place called Mies, kept in detention about a week, and had then “continued his journey”, presumably to Basle—where, however, he had never arrived.

The more I thought about it the more all this seemed to be thoroughly “fishy”. I kept repeating in my mind: “If an old lady of seventy sends a confused message through a ‘niece’ and then promptly vanishes, and some days later an unknown person sends an anonymous message to Switzerland which proves to have no foundation, how much is all this worth?”

There was an even stranger feature of the case. Weir had assured me that Obry was a man of eminently sane and self-possessed character, and this opinion had been endorsed by other friends of his whom I had met in London before leaving. Was it likely, then, that within an hour or two of setting out on such an adventure he

would voluntarily betray himself to a chance passenger in the train, an old lady of seventy whom he had never seen before! The thing seemed preposterous.

The whole story savoured of a frame-up. Alfred Obry, I said to myself at this stage, must probably be somewhere either in Germany or the Protectorate, arrested or in hiding, perhaps using the name Friedrich Schweigler, but there were unknown people in the picture who had seen fit, either for his protection or to mislead searchers, to produce the impression that he had already escaped. The search was going to be anything but simple.

Our air liner had crossed the North Sea in gorgeous sunshine, then soared over Holland high above banks of clouds that resembled a dazzling ocean of vast rolls of shining cotton-wool. The steward had passed the usual pilot's bulletin giving our position, height, speed, and temperature of the outer air—Dutch-German frontier, 9,000 feet, 150 miles per hour, minus two degrees Centigrade. Then another bulletin after Hanover, and soon we knew we were approaching Berlin. But the city was invisible. We were now skimming through wet wisps of surface cloud. It grew darker though it was midday. It must be raining below. Now nothing at all was visible but grey cloud, around, above, beneath. The pilot was flying by those miraculous indications which guide in complete obscurity. But the altometer showed we were steadily descending, the changed note of the propellers indicated a slower speed. The earth reappeared close underneath us, veiled and misty for a moment, then wet, shiny and clear. With the unbelievable precision of an arrow that hits the bull's-eye though shot from hundreds of miles, the plane floated down on the cemented runways of Tempelhof aerodrome.

The sky began to clear as the taxi bore me rapidly through the familiar streets. The houses were bedecked with swastika flags, but so frequent were the official fêtes-to-order that one ceased to ask what all the fuss was about. I recalled, however, that it was the First of May, the proletarian holiday which Hitler copied from the Bolsheviks—like so many other things long before the famous pact was dreamt of. All shops were shut, and as we approached Unter den Linden the crowds became dense. I had not engaged a room knowing that as a faithful customer I could always count on accommodation at the Adlon. But I had difficulty in getting to the entrance of the hotel, so closely packed were the crowds, and I entered through two ranks of onlookers waiting for somebody very much more attractive. It was Hess, the Führer's deputy, who was just coming out to enter a car accompanied by a swarm of officers and officials. The porter carrying my bags circumvented them, and I followed to the lift. Installed in my room, I went to the window and threw it open to look out upon the masses below. A string of open cars was slowly approaching along the wide avenue between the lines of onlookers, and in the front car, standing, was the slight, dapper figure of the Führer, acknowledging the frenzied shouts of "Heil!" with an abrupt movement of his forearm.

III

HITLER stood in the front seat of his car, as the pictures have so often shown him, the car moving slowly along Unter den Linden between two rows of densely-packed wildly-cheering crowds. "Heil! Heil! Heil!" He acknowledged the acclamations without smiling, not extending his arm as did the throngs acclaiming him, but raising his forearm only, palm forward.

The day's celebrations had begun with a great gathering of the Hitler Youth in the vast Olympic Stadium. The proceedings were somewhat spoilt by rain, which damped the Führer's exhortations to the youth of Germany to grow up into "upright, hard, ruthless men and women". Nothing, he told them, was to be obtained except by fighting, or to be kept but by force of arms.

Toward midday the weather improved and the later festivities passed off in gaiety. The Lustgarten, the park in front of the ex-Kaiser's palace, was transformed into a vast rectangular auditorium festooned with long red swastika banners and streamers. In the middle a huge maypole was erected, at the far end a large tribune. Many thousands of people could assemble in the space enclosed with banners.

I pushed my way along just in time to hear the Führer's second harangue. Though I was on the outskirts of the crowd I heard quite clearly, for loudspeakers were attached to many of the lamp-posts all down the avenue.

Shouting in his characteristic style, often hysterical, Hitler told the assembled multitudes that the old exponents of the policy of encirclement of Germany were again active. "They are the international gang of warmongers who began their dirty work by attacking Germany in 1914," he cried. "The democratic gutter press spreads lies and agitates for war, casting suspicions upon us and defaming us. They think they know everything. But there was just one thing they didn't know, and that was that I was coming into power."

At this there was tumultuous applause.

Hitler was followed by Goering, who made an unimpressive speech which was relatively feebly applauded.

Towards evening dancing began around the maypole, and went on to the accompaniment of fireworks until nearly midnight.

Demagogic oratory always nauseates me. Hitler's platform style struck me by its resemblance to Lenin's. Lenin, too, always shouted at the top of his voice when addressing large public meetings, brandishing his arms. Noise and gesticulation seem to me to be the worst argument-ersatz. But there was a difference between the two men in other respects. I heard Lenin speak many times, but never heard him hysterical. And although Lenin indulged in the same kind of cheap jibe in which Hitler found so much satisfaction, there was less of the boastful and braggart first personal pronoun in his orations. Hitler talked largely of himself, Lenin always of an idea.

In the Obry matter I at once got into communication with certain people whom his friends had indicated to me with the object of inquiring whether he might be registered

in his own name in some concentration camp. One of these persons was a member of the Nazi party, another closely associated with it. They will be referred to again later. In spite of their efforts, which took several days, no trace of the missing man could be found.

Meanwhile, Weir sent me a message to say the Nazi lawyer of Vienna had retired from the case. I then communicated by telephone with a certain gentleman in Prague, to whom I shall refer as Herr Haller, who was connected with some of Obry's business affairs and who had been notified in duly camouflaged terms that he would hear from me.

One had to be very careful about the telephone. The line between Prague and Berlin was less supervised than the international communications, but I never made any call from the hotel that I didn't want overheard. Knowing that every conversation would be recorded, I made a number of innocuous calls to London and Paris for the benefit of the hotel operator—and also for the benefit of a lady who I noticed had been put in the next room to mine and who sat very close to the communicating door every time I used the telephone, for I could hear her breathing. (People on such a job really should learn to breathe silently!) She disappeared after a few days.

But when I wanted to speak to Prague I slipped out to an evening telephone office. There was always a queue of people waiting to make inter-urban calls about business or family matters (through the glass doors you could hear most of what they said), and there I could be sure that my inquiry to Herr Haller's private residence in Prague as to "news of Alfred" would pass unnoticed, squeezed in among the mass of other burgher calls.

Herr Haller informed me that he believed he had now

discovered where Alfred was, though he could not give details by telephone. He had sent a messenger to get news, and it would be useless, he said, for me to come to Prague before the messenger returned. It looked as if my search for Obry might never have to begin. But there was something in the manner of speech of Herr Haller, perhaps some subtle intonation of voice, that I didn't like. When three or four days passed and all he had to say when I telephoned again was that he was still awaiting the return of the messenger I decided to go to Prague without further delay.

But to enter the new Protectorate was no easy matter. A special permit had to be procured. The procedure was that the applicant applied first to the Ministry of Economics, and when the reasons for the journey had been examined and found valid he was passed on to the secret police—the Gestapo—who examined him anew from their point of view.

The reasons for closing the Protectorate frontier on all sides, including the German—perhaps especially the German—were many. The experience of the invasion of Austria a year earlier had shown that the abolition of the frontier on that occasion had resulted in the disorganized irruption of great numbers of greedy inhabitants of south Germany eager to divest the newly incorporated territory of its supplies, which by comparison with Germany were both plentiful and cheap. This had a doubly unfortunate effect from the Nazi point of view. It had opened the eyes of the Austrians to the real conditions prevailing in the land of Austria's supposed "liberators", and it deprived the Berlin Government of large supplies which it had intended to seize for itself. This mistake was not to be repeated in Czechoslovakia. Besides, in this case, a

still more potent motive existed for preventing free passage to and fro. In entering Austria Hitler had entered a country a large section of whose population accorded him at the time an uproarious welcome whatever they felt later when they came to their senses, but Czechoslovakia was a conquered, embittered, frankly hostile State. The utmost caution had to be taken to control the percolation in both directions of Czechs and Germans, for it was realized from the outset that final subjugation of the country would not be an easy matter. If there were revolts the German people must not hear about them. On the economic side, furthermore, it was essential that the vast supplies of food, money and material should fall into the hands not of private invaders, as happened in Austria, but solely of the Nazi Government. On the very day of the occupation the frontier was "hermetically sealed" and remained so until the outbreak of war and after. Even for Germans it was more difficult to travel to the Protectorate than to any other country in Europe.

I set out for the Ministry of Economics armed with a letter of introduction from the British Embassy. Whether it would avail was doubtful, I was told at the Embassy, for in view of strained relations an introduction from the British authorities was hardly the best recommendation. Only the week before someone from our passport office had wanted to go to Prague and had been refused. "You had better ask for the shortest possible period of stay," I was told.

This was not encouraging, and I set out full of misgivings. I decided to ask only for a twenty-four-hour permit, on the thin-end-of-the-wedge principle; if I got this all right I would come back in a few days and say it

had not been quite enough; might I have another permit for forty-eight hours?

The Embassy's letter was merely an introduction. It did not explain any motive for my application in which the Embassy was not concerned. I had to present (or invent) my motive myself, and I preferred, if possible, not to say anything about my real reasons for going to Prague. However, I was fortunately able to produce a bundle of correspondence from Czechoslovakia dating from 1937 relating to certain past business matters. I decided to say that the object of my visit was to settle up the matters referred to in this correspondence. The weak point about it was that the small town from which the letters originated was not really in the Protectorate at all; it was in one of the Sudetenland provinces which had been ceded to Germany in October, 1938. If the place were looked up on the map this would inevitably be discovered, but I would then say that the writers, being Czechs, had moved to Prague after the changes of October, 1938. If I were asked for their address I would say that I could only find this out at Prague through certain banks or firms; and if I were asked to specify the banks and firms, I had prepared a list of business houses who had nothing whatever to do with the matter, but if I readily quoted their names I counted upon this producing the desired effect.

I rehearsed all this as I walked along from the Embassy to the Ministry of Economics. The introductory letter got me past the inquiry office and into that of the head of the department concerned, though only to the second in command. "The Chief is out," the warder said who showed me in. "Like my luck," I said to myself. But blessings do really often come in disguise. The second in

command was a pleasant fellow whom I will call Stein (he was truly a nice fellow, and was well known to our people in Berlin, and the only reason I don't give his name is because I took him in—I would like some day to tell him I am sorry I had to). After reading the letter of introduction Stein spoke to me in English, which he said he had learnt in South Africa where he had been for several years with a German textile firm. Ingratiatingly, I flattered him on his linguistic abilities, and racked my brains to think of somebody in South Africa to refer to in order to make congenial conversation.

"Did you know the firm of Mosenthal and Company of Cape Town by any chance? I knew one or two people in that firm," I said, mentioning some wool merchants I happened to have heard of—and promptly nearly had a fit when I remembered the firm was Jewish!

But it went down all right. Stein's South African days had belonged to pre-Hitlerian times. "Mosenthal & Co.? Why, of course. We dealt with them. You don't happen to remember Mr. So-and-so who used to run their European department?" I forget the name he mentioned, never having heard it before.

"Why, certainly I do," I exclaimed with as much delight as untruthfulness. "Or I should say, I *used* to know him," I added in self-protection, "for I haven't seen or heard of him for years."

"He died three years ago," said Stein—and I breathed again and replied in suitable terms.

"What can I do for you?" he asked eventually. "It isn't, I hope, a permit to the Protectorate?"

"It is," I said with a failing heart.

His face clouded. "It is very difficult. What is your business and how long will it take?"

"A few hours only," I said hastily. "I will take the night train, do what I have to do in one day, and return the next night. This is what I want to attend to——" and I showed him the bundle of correspondence and said the piece I had carefully prepared.

He saw the Czech letter headings, glanced hastily at the top letter and asked no further questions at all.

"I will see what I can do for you. But I am afraid you will have to wait till two o'clock as my Chief is out." He looked up at the clock. "That will give us just time to have our lunches and meet again here."

Our lunches? This was an opening not to be missed. "I wonder," I said pressingly, "if you would give me the great pleasure of lunching with me? We might think of some more mutual acquaintances."

To my joy he accepted, probably delighted to have an opportunity of practising his English further. I suggested the Bristol, but this he evidently considered a bit too public. After all, he was a Nazi official and I an Englishman. High officials could do as they pleased, but medium ones like himself had to think of their positions. So he suggested Kempinski's in the Leipzigerstrasse as being "nearer", which perhaps it was by a few yards, so to Kempinski's we went and installed ourselves in an unobtrusive cubicle of that excellent establishment.

I made the most of the propitious occasion. When I told Herr Stein that one of the reasons for my being in Germany was to see about the publication of a book I had written exposing the evils of Bolshevism my stock soared visibly. "I must tell my Chief that," he said.

It was a bit more difficult when we got to Anglo-German relations. "The Moscow Communists are terrible people," he said with disgust, "and yet your Mr. Cham-

berlain is trying to make a pact with them to encircle us. That is a wicked policy."

With my Prague permit ever in mind I was not prepared to argue this ticklish matter. I was willing to concede anything. I said evasively that I deprecated this aspect of Mr. Chamberlain's policy and that I believed many others in England did too.

"The Bolsheviks will certainly let you down," he went on. "They will use their propaganda to hit you in the back and break up your Empire. . . . The British Empire is weak enough, anyway," he added.

"You think so?"

"Well, look at South Africa."

"You mean?"

"Well, if there was a war do you think South Africa would stay with you? They would break away at once!"

"Is that the impression you gathered when you lived there?"

"Without the slightest doubt."

I said it was very sad and agreed that England ought to do her utmost to keep on good terms with Germany.

On the way back to the Ministry I put out a feeler about my permit. "By the way, about that permit to the Protectorate, if by any chance I *don't* manage to do my business there in a single day do you think when I come back I shall be able to get a renewal?"

"You think one day may not be enough? Shall I ask for three days?"

I stammered my thanks.

"I don't promise it," he cautioned me, "but I'll ask."

He left me in his office while he went to his Chief. A few minutes later he returned with a signed form. "Three days," he announced with evident pleasure, but added

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

"I saw my unconcealed delight, "you still have to see the Gestapo, you know."

"Will they make any difficulties?"

"Ask for Mr. So-and-so and say you came from me. By the time you get there I shall have had time to telephone to him. I'll see it is all right."

Thanking him profusely and rejoicing at my luck I set out for the Gestapo.

Just a word here about this notorious institution, for those who have not had direct experience of it. The word is an abbreviation of *Geheimstaatspolizei*, which means Secret State Police. It is the invisible, all-pervading organization that spies upon the bodily actions of the populace, forming a natural complement to Dr. Goebbels's propaganda bureau whose function is to control their minds. The striking similarity in character and organization between the Nazi and Bolshevik secret police systems has attracted the attention of all who have had experience of them both. Even the Nazi mode of nomenclature with an abbreviated title is copied from the Bolshevik G.P.U. or OGPU (which stands for "Department of State Political Control"). Just as in Bolshevik Russia, so in Nazi Germany no department of life escapes the all-seeing eye of ubiquitous secret agents. They tap telephone conversations and postal communications; eavesdrop on trains and trams, in cafés and restaurants; through Youth and other popular organizations they provoke young people to betray parents and elders who criticize the regime; ferret out audacious citizens who, with their ear to toned-down radio sets, listen eagerly for foreign wireless news; and in general act the part of *agents provocateurs*—itself a Russian invention.

The headquarters of the Gestapo in Berlin is a huge

barracks-like building in the Alexanderplatz. As I hurried there I examined the paper I had been given by the Ministry of Economics. It simply said the Ministry had no objection to my going to the Protectorate for a period of three days, subject to the approval of the State Secret Police.

There was a crowd of people in the room to which I had been directed. A young man in black uniform with the double-lightning-stroke badge of the *Schutzstaffel* (generally referred to as S.S. men or Black Guards) on his arm conducted me to the office of the head of the department. This official, a tall, bony man dressed in mufti, when I said I had come from Herr Stein, took my British passport without a word, turned over its pages rather curiously, glanced up at me for a moment, then handed the passport with the letter from the Ministry of Economics to the man in black uniform.

"Make a three days' permit," he ordered, and to me: "Take a seat."

A few minutes later the young man returned with my passport and a green card. The official took them, signed the card, and handed them back to me without a word. I said: "Thank you very much. Good day." He didn't answer the greeting. On the wall hung a notice: "Here the only greeting that counts is 'Heil Hitler!'" But somehow I couldn't bring myself to say it to this sullen official, and he certainly didn't expect it from me. On the other hand, for a Nazi to say "Good day" or "Good-bye" or, still worse, the former German greeting "Greet God!" is nothing short of blasphemy. So he said nothing, leaving me to feel I was beyond the pale. However, it didn't worry me much. It wasn't that that I was thinking of as I walked out past the Black Guards at the door. I

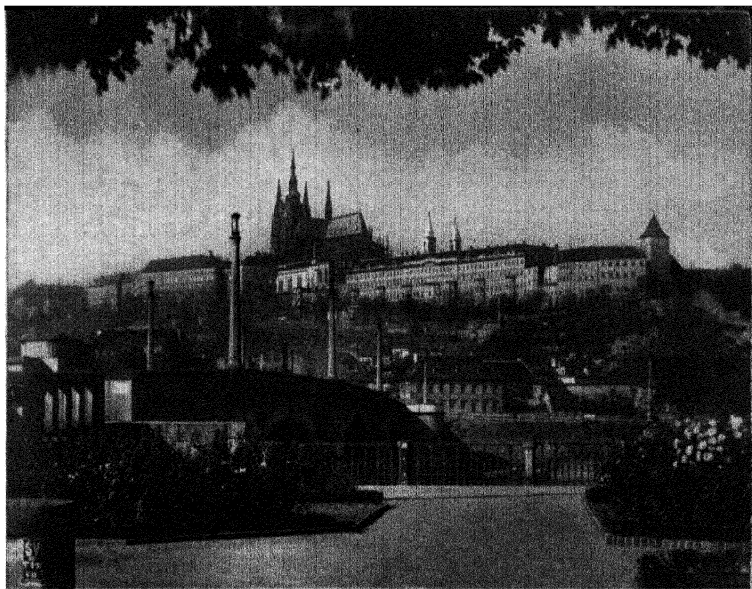
was thinking: "I wonder, if I had asked for a week, would I have wangled it? Next time I *will* ask for a week."

But I did not have occasion to apply to friend Stein any more, for in the end I established such a relationship with the Gestapo that no official would have omitted to greet me with courtesy or accompany me to the door, and as for this "almost impossible permit" I could obtain its renewal for any period I cared to ask.

I still smile when I recall that I brought about this happy state of affairs by accusing them of murder.

In pre-war Germany, as in Bolshevist Russia, it was the plutocrats who were the Little Jack Horners. Ordinary railway passengers were subjected to minute scrutiny in crossing the Protectorate border. But travelling in a first class sleeper with army officers and Government officials I merely confided my passport, my Gestapo permit, and my *Geldbescheinigung* (a declaration of money in one's possession) to the conductor, gave him five marks, went to bed and woke up in Prague.

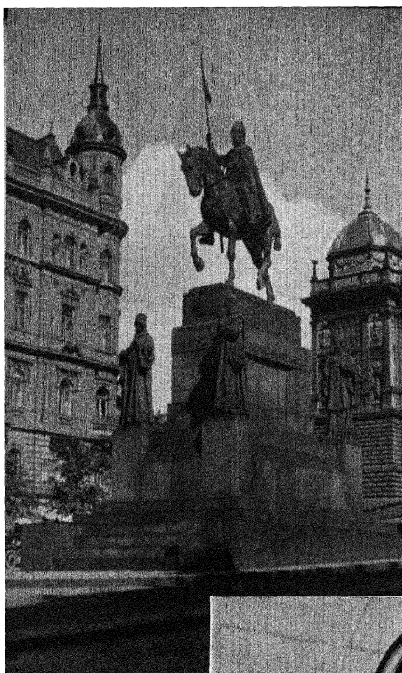
It was with strange feelings that I drove through the streets of this so-recently free and successful city. Two months had elapsed since its occupation by Hitler. On the surface people carried on their existence as before, plied their trades, enjoyed their amusements. At eight in the morning the shops were already open, the cafés serving early customers. Numerous booths displayed an array of newspapers in many tongues. But this was all superficial. The black-uniformed German S.S. guards striding along in pairs, the high-powered cars with huge swastika flags painted on them (so that they couldn't be torn off), carrying batches of German officers and soldiers hither and thither; were constant reminders that the city no longer



PRAGUE. THE HRADSHIN PALACE



MIES. THE MARKET PLACE



GOOD KING WENCESLAS
LOOKS OUT

THE AUTHOR
RETURNING FROM
BERLIN



belonged to its inhabitants. Very necessary to the invaders were these precautions. For beneath the surface the fire of revolt smouldered defiantly. The nation had not surrendered its spirit. Two months' "protection" had only served finally to exacerbate the populace.

To assure myself the best company for the purposes I had in view I put up at the Hôtel Alcron, which was taken over by the Gestapo upon the occupation of the city and which continued to be the headquarters of its chiefs when a huge building a short distance away was commandeered for offices. I judged that the telephone conversations at that hotel would probably be less supervised than at any other.

In the course of the morning I set out to visit Herr Haller, the gentleman who had told me over the telephone that he had sent a messenger in search of Obry. He occupied spacious offices in one of the main streets. The house was a typical one for eastern Europe, vast and honey-combed with a maze of those passages which are a peculiarity of Prague. I finally found the wide and gloomy staircase which led up to a door with Herr Haller's plate on it.

He opened the door to me himself—a little man with an ingratiating manner, rather nervous, very Slav, and (as I soon discovered) very unpunctual. If he said eleven o'clock it might mean anything, but not eleven. He spoke German fluently but ungrammatically. He greeted me warmly but in a cautious undertone, and led me into an inner room, shutting the door of the anti-chamber but leaving the communicating door open. In this way it was impossible for anyone to listen at this door, while we should be unheard two rooms away, where two women secretaries were working in the outer room. He also shut

the windows. "It is impossible to be too cautious," he said. Then, with a pleasant but nervous smile, he began to talk about Obry, asking after the relatives in London, and whether they knew anything.

I told him of Madame Prosser's letter from Paris, and the mysterious unsigned telegram of April 24th. It was, of course, the first he had heard of Madame Prosser, and as for the telegram there had been so many telephonic and telegraphic communications, he said, that he couldn't possibly remember them all. But the general trend of what had been guessed in London was correct. Obry had set out on his journey on Easter Monday, disguised as a tailor with a passport in the name of "Friedrich Schweigler," and he had certainly been arrested, though what had subsequently become of him nobody yet knew.

The account of events which Haller gave me was sadly scrappy and incomplete, and I discovered later that it was very misleading. He claimed to know very little of how Obry had obtained his false passport. There were shady characters mixed up in the affair, he said, men who worked secretly hand-in-glove with the Gestapo. All he knew about it was that Obry was reported to have been arrested for smuggling—an absurd charge, of course, for he was fleeing for his life. Six days later, on April 16th, he was reported released. Nothing further having been heard of him, Haller had sent a messenger to investigate.

"But you told me over the telephone to Berlin that you knew where he was," I reminded him.

"I supposed he might be at Eger, the next big town on that stretch of railway, in the *Untersuchungsgefängnis*" (temporary prison during examination).

"And is he?"

"I don't know, the messenger hasn't returned."

I suggested that we ought immediately to take steps to find out officially if he was there. But he protested and begged me to do nothing until his messenger returned. "Obry's safety might be compromised by any other inquiries," he said.

I saw that Herr Haller had not much confidence in me. I also saw that he was very nervous about his own position in the affair, for his story had been interspersed with frequent disavowals of any complicity in it. He had done his best to dissuade Obry from the escapade, he declared. As for the "shady characters" who had procured the false papers, I gathered from this first talk that Haller had had nothing to do with them.

I foresaw that I should have to contact these "shady characters" personally. For the moment, however, I deferred to Haller's request to await the return of his messenger before I did anything in the matter. But some days later, when I was spending a week-end at Dresden, I confided the situation to a lawyer who lived there, who was a friend of Obry's friends in London. This gentleman, who spoke English perfectly, occupied a consultative post of responsibility in official circles, but his sentiments were none the less strongly anti-Nazi—for reasons which I cannot repeat because they would obviously give him away. I will refer to him as Dr. Franz.

Franz was very interested in the Obry affair. He knew him well by name though he had never actually met him. "He certainly put his foot in it! Embargo violations—defiance of the police—procuring of false papers—flight in disguise—what more could he have done? . . . But I suppose his relatives would be prepared to buy him out?" Franz was the sort of man who always comes

straight to the point. "In English money, you know." He knew his Nazis.

"How could I bring the money into Germany?" I asked. "There are restrictions."

Franz snorted at my *naïveté*. "Pooh, when the Gestapo sniff a fat packet of Bank of England notes they'll charter you an aeroplane if need be to bring them over! . . . Only," he added, "when it comes to actually handing over the cash be very careful that they let your bird out of the cage first. Demand an escort to the frontier, and only at the very moment that Alfred Obry, *alias* Friedrich Schweigler, puts his foot over the border on to Swiss or Dutch or Hungarian soil—whichever way they let him out—only at that moment hand over the money, not one second before. I'm telling you."

Franz, as I say, knew his Nazis.

I went away and thought about this. It was obviously the best and simplest solution. I knew Obry's friends in London would be willing to buy him out, so it would merely be a question of bargaining.

The more I thought about the matter the more I felt that Haller's policy of indefinite waiting was wrong. But before the Gestapo was approached with a view to buying out the captive it seemed to me essential to get some data as to how much they knew about him, whether they had already discovered his identity, where and why they were holding him, and so forth, otherwise we should be completely in their hands. Yet the only way to find out these things appeared to be to go to the little town of Mies where Obry was said to have been arrested, and make direct inquiries. Should I send someone there? Should I go myself? And if so, alone or accompanied?

I decided to consult Franz again.

But Franz didn't like an Englishman to be often visiting his office, nor did he want to be seen with me much in restaurants. So he came, perhaps a little nervously, to my room at my hotel, coming straight up without asking for me below.

Before he arrived I placed the photograph of a certain very beautiful lady prominently on my desk.

We sat down on the sofa to liqueur and cigarettes. It was not long before his eye caught the photograph.

"Who is the beautiful lady, if I may ask?"

"My fiancée," I said untruthfully.

"Oh, I do congratulate you." He rose and looked at the picture admiringly. "You are very fortunate," he said.

"I am, very."

Is there anything that quicker forms a link between two men of taste and understanding than agreement about women? My move had been guesswork, but it hit the mark. Shall I ever have to admit this to Franz? I caught him often looking at the photograph. It took his mind off the Gestapo.

I told him of my intention either to send someone to Mies or to go there myself.

"For heaven's sake, don't be such a fool as to go there yourself! Don't you know what our Gestapo people are like? And you, an Englishman! I wouldn't give sixpence for your life if I knew you had thrown yourself into that den of wolves! "

No, there was a better way of going about it, he said—through the Gestapo, certainly, but from its headquarters. He was going next day to Berlin, he told me, and would be dining with Himmler's mistress (Himmler, the head of the Gestapo); Himmler was not at present in Berlin, but

through his mistress Franz would get me a personal introduction to Wolf, one of his right-hand men. He would breathe just enough about the case to the lady for her to be able to hint to the said Wolf what his interest in the matter might amount to. Then I should go personally, as representing the relatives and important interested parties, and suggest to the Gestapo that it was really quite useless for them to keep in prison this elderly gentleman who was over sixty years of age; that even if he had perpetrated some "indiscretions" they were excusable in the circumstances and had not done anyone any harm; so would it not be more reasonable and satisfactory all round to come to an "arrangement" in the matter and release him for a suitable consideration?

Though this plan was exactly what Haller had asked me not to do, it seemed to me the obvious one to follow. Over a week had passed since I left Prague, and still Haller reported that his messenger had not returned. Six weeks had now elapsed since Obry's disappearance, and all reports about him had been either too vague or too suspicious to rely upon. It was most unlikely that he should have succeeded in keeping up his fictitious rôle all this time. It was far more probable that the Gestapo had found out who he was and were holding him as a hostage, expecting his relatives to make inquiries. This was the more likely because his disappearance from Brünn must have been noticed when he ceased to report to the police. It was also possible that when inquiries had not started he had been stuck away in some concentration camp and forgotten. Such things had often happened.

I do not know what conversations actually took place as the result of Franz's *démarche* through Himmler's mistress. I only know that a couple of days later Franz

told me he "had heard" that the best plan would be for me to consult a certain prominent Sudetenland lawyer, a close friend of Gauleiter Henlein—that same Henlein who achieved notoriety in 1938 as leader of the Sudeten secessionists and whom Hitler rewarded by making him governor of the province. Franz gave me a warm letter of introduction to this lawyer containing references to certain highly placed persons in Berlin. The letter requested that when it was presented the recipient should call up the writer, who would give him additional information which could better be explained verbally than in writing.

"Play up all the big names you can," Franz instructed me, "and don't forget to broach the subject of his fee, and say that it will be in sterling. That'll get him."

So thus coached, and armed with the letter, I set out next day for Sudetenland.

IV

THERE are a good many towns in Sudetenland. Eger, Asch, Graslitz, Marienbad, Carlsbad, Brux, Dux, Aussig, Bodenbach, Reichenberg, Schönberg, Sternberg, are all names that were very much in the news during that stirring autumn of 1938 when the "September crisis" led to "Munich". Then it was that the outlying sections of Czechoslovakia in which these places are situated were torn off and incorporated in the Reich. At the time of which I write, the summer of 1939, that incorporation was eight months old.

Those who took the most prominent part in the revolt and who prepared the ground for the final subjugation of Czechoslovakia by seditious activities carried on across the new frontier, enjoyed special favour and distinction in the Führer's eyes. Among these was the gentleman I was about to visit, to whom I will refer as Dr. Willy Bergmann. If I do not quote his real name it is partly because I do not want to draw attention to certain connexions I wish to conceal, and partly because it would be ungracious of me to broadcast to the world the venality of a man who, so far as I personally was concerned, was both courteous and helpful. "Dr. Willy Bergmann" is not likely to give himself away if this narrative ever comes to his notice, for by doing so he would reveal the intriguing fact that he—a bosom friend of Gauleiter Henlein, and a high officer of the Black Guards, the elect Nazi bodyguard—was not above bargaining for the clandestine delivery to me, for a consideration in sterling,

of a heinous offender against Nazi laws, Alfred Obry to wit, it being understood, of course, that a liberal portion of the said consideration should find its way into Dr. Bergmann's pocket.

Let me say at once that I found Dr. Bergmann a delightful person. He was hail-fellow-well-met, devoid of "side" and all trace of that lurking arrogance which distinguishes so many Nazi officials. His eye gleamed with a lively twinkle—of mischief or cunning, perhaps both. He put me in a comfortable chair and gave me an excellent cigar while he read Franz's letter of introduction. Then he nodded and said, "He wants me to ring him up," and called his secretary to obtain the trunk connexion urgently. Meanwhile: "What can I do for you?"

"Have you ever heard the name of Alfred Obry?" I began.

He thought for a moment. Wasn't that the name of the big Czech industrialist—at Brünn or somewhere? I said it was. He said he knew of him very well. He (Bergmann) was lawyer to a bank in Prague which handled some of the accounts of the enterprises with which the name of Obry was connected.

"Did you know that he has disappeared completely without trace?" I asked cautiously.

"No. When? Where?"

"About Easter. Since then not a word has been heard of him, and the friends and relatives in England are naturally very anxious." (Bergmann must know nothing yet of "Friedrich Schweigler" lest Obry meanwhile should succeed in escaping under this name.)

"Naturally. But why haven't they begun an inquiry?"

I explained that Obry had got into trouble with the Nazi authorities through infringing certain regulations, and was under police supervision. The situation being delicate on this account, the relatives had asked me if I, being in Germany, could spare the time to look into the matter.

At this point Franz was announced on the telephone. Bergmann spoke from his desk and I could hear every word, not only of what Bergmann said but what Franz said too—perhaps Franz was speaking loud on purpose for me to hear if I happened to be sitting near. After an exchange of courtesies between “the dear and respected colleagues” Franz elaborated his introductory letter, the gist being that he had reason to think there must be a deeper background to my errand than appeared on the surface or than I was willing to reveal; for otherwise, said Franz, it was incomprehensible that an “important man”, of “great note”, “who was even a ‘sir’”, and who had the very best connexions in London and Berlin as he (Franz) could testify, should have been asked to undertake the inquiry. Moreover, he added, I was known to be strongly anti-Bolshevist in my sentiments “and therefore friendly disposed to Germany”.

This master stroke had precisely the desired effect. Bergmann’s tone became lowered and deferential even while he still held the telephone, and when he put it down and turned to me again he spent ten minutes telling me that a year earlier, at the time of the Sudeten negotiations, he had met Lord Runciman and Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin of the Foreign Office when they had been sent out to Czechoslovakia to help settle the Sudeten dispute, and he assured me he had the profoundest regard and admiration for them both and considered that it was due to the fair and

impartial attitude of these two noted Englishmen that justice had been done to Sudeten claims.

After Franz's happy intervention Bergmann was convinced that my inquiry about Obry must have a diplomatic background, which for reasons best known to the great ones of the earth must not be spoken of openly. It was in tones of marked deference that he begged me to proceed with my exposé. I saw how right Franz had been when he had said, "Play up the big names," and had added, "Relations with England may be strained, but a lord is always a lord—to a German perhaps more than to a Britisher!"

I proceeded, therefore, to expound to Dr. Bergmann, with sufficient reserve to suggest that I could say much more if I wished, that "certain important people in London"—(and I left Dr. Bergmann to conjecture whether I meant the Lord Chancellor, the Prime Minister or the King)—were greatly interested in finding Obry and getting him safely to England. "He is an elderly man," I argued, "and it can hardly be of any interest to you to keep him interned. If you find it necessary to impose a formal penalty on account of his indiscretions there will be no difficulty on our side about meeting it." And I asked him straight out if the whole matter could not be settled for a sum privately without going through any courts and without any publicity.

He nodded, smiling, with a good-natured, yet mischievous look. "He may have been evading some kind of payments—that is a serious offence, you know." I pretended ignorance of the nature of his offence. "And furthermore," he went on, digging about among papers in a file, "if I remember, there were things that would have to be settled concerning his enterprises before he could

emigrate, even if he had committed no offence."

Bergmann was going to be a hard bargainer.

"But in principle," I pressed, "would it be possible to get him released by—so to speak—private arrangement?"

He replied cautiously that it "might be possible".

"How shall we go about it?"

"First he must be found. I will have inquiries made through the Gestapo at Prague and Brünn."

"Perhaps I ought to tell you," I explained, "that the relatives suspect that he may have attempted flight and that he may have been caught and put in a concentration camp."

Bergmann immediately made inquiries by telephone to certain prisons, but as these produced no result he drew the conclusion that Obry must have been sent back to Prague. So he suggested that I should go straightway to Prague and discuss the whole affair with a certain Dr. Bock, director of one of the banks concerned with Obry's interests. He would telephone to Bock to announce my coming, and through him the Gestapo inquiries could be launched.

I thanked him and broached delicately the subject of his fee, as Franz had told me to do, not forgetting to suggest that it might be more convenient for all concerned that the settlement should be in sterling. He held up his hands. "No question of fees, no fees at all!" he protested. I protested in turn. "No, no," he repeated, "don't raise the question!"—and then, perhaps inadvertently, he let slip, "*Mit dem Bock werden wir das Geschäft zusammen machen*—Bock and I will do the business together."

I understood perfectly and said no more. The only

question that remained was how I should get into the Protectorate. He thought of this himself and asked me if I had a Gestapo permit. I showed him my earlier three-day permit. He looked at it with curiosity.

"Did you have much difficulty in getting it? They grant very few."

I told him I had got it quite easily, and when he asked what had taken me recently to Prague (he was evidently curious to know whether I had already taken any steps in the Obry matter) I told him the same story as I had told at the Ministry of Economics.

"I will help you to get a renewal," he said. "How much time will you need? Shall I say two weeks? It is rare that they give more than twenty-four hours, but if I write personally——"

He called his secretary and dictated a letter to the chief of the provincial Gestapo. Unfortunately he sealed this letter when he handed it to me, otherwise I should certainly have copied it into my note-book on the way. But he gave it to me to read before sealing, and I remember most of it. The letter-heading contained his various titles, one of which was "SS Standard Bearer". This sign **SS**, looking like a stroke of lightning, is really the old German letter "S" and is used to represent "S.S." (Schutz-Staffel), the élite Nazi "Black Guard" body-guard to whose ranks only men with certain special qualifications are admitted.

The letter, addressed to the Chief Commissar of the Gestapo, began, "Dear Party Comrade", and said that I belonged to influential circles in London which "even at this moment" were friendly to Germany; that I had the highest references from Berlin, where I was known as a strong critic of Bolshevism; that I was now proceed-

ing to Prague on special business with which the writer was well acquainted; and would the dear Party Comrade kindly see his way, if possible, to provide me with a two-weeks' permit to the Protectorate with the right to cross the frontier whenever necessary during that period. The letter concluded: "I thank you in advance and send you my heartiest Heil Hitler."

Taking my leave cordially from Dr. Bergmann after this successful interview I made my way to the Gestapo. It was housed (as I soon learnt was the frequent practice in the provinces) in a large, plain villa on the outskirts of the town. But the moment one entered it one felt it to be a prison, or worse. A strong iron grille with a catch-lock had been erected barring the steps outside the front door. A notice displayed prominently on the wall said:

Visas to the Protectorate. Permits to cross the frontier are issued only to the following: (1) Those who can prove residence in the Protectorate to which they are returning permanently; (2) those who produce a doctor's certificate of the death or dangerous illness of a close relative; (3) for all other reasons application must be made in person to the Ministry of Economics at Berlin.

At the foot of the notice the following words were added in heavy type and underlined:

No exceptions. Useless to ask. Heil Hitler!

I rang the bell and a man's face appeared behind a little barred window at the side of the iron grille. I showed him the letter. He pressed a button, the catch-lock snapped, the grille slid aside and back into place

again behind me with a bang. The man came out from his little spy-hole and gave me a slip on which was written the name of the official I had to see and the hour of my entry. He called a Black Guard with a swastika badge on his arm and two revolvers in his belt to conduct me to the Chief's office. We went silently upstairs. I noticed that many of the room doors had iron grids barring their approach similar to that at the front entrance. The villa was large, the staircases wide and bare. Complete silence reigned, except for the dull tapping of typewriters. In every corridor were guards armed like my guide, but none of them spoke. Except that it was cleaner than a Russian building, the atmosphere was exactly that of the Cheka-Ogpu.

I was left in a passage while my guide went into a room with Bergmann's letter. The grid of the entrance to this room was swung aside, and two armed black guards stood outside it. Finally, I was shown in.

The man who stood waiting to receive me bore at first glance a strong resemblance to the official at the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin who had issued me my first permit. For a moment I thought it was the same man. But apart from his making no sign of recognition I soon saw by the difference in manner that the resemblance lay only in type. Like the other, this man also was the tall, thin-haired, bony, rather than the thickset bull-necked type of German. He stood at his desk with Bergmann's letter in his hand. Like his Berlin counterpart, he gave me no greeting, but motioned me to a chair. (Here also, as in all Government offices, hung the notice: "The only greeting that counts is 'Heil Hitler!'") Then, still holding Bergmann's letter, he said abruptly: "I should like to ask you a question. Explain to me, please, why your Government

is currying favour with the Bolsheviks?" ("Versucht sich bei den Bolschewikern einzuschmeicheln" was the exact phrase he used.)

This question of Britain's overtures to Russia was the most awkward of questions I had to face. It was always coming up in one form or another. But it was very unexpected at this moment, especially as Bergmann in the whole of my long interview with him had not once mentioned politics. However, often having to face it, I had thought out a stock answer to it. I am well aware that this answer is open to the charge of special pleading, but it must not be forgotten that my immediate aim was not to plead Britain's cause but to get something out of the Nazis. The line I took was that I was convinced that the friction between Britain and Germany was the result of "a monstrous misunderstanding". It all resulted, I said, from the seizure of Czechoslovakia. Britain's point of view regarding that event was that Hitler had agreed that there should be no further territorial changes without consultation with Chamberlain. The Führer, on the other hand, maintained that he had been *invited* to occupy Czechoslovakia by President Hacha, so that the undertaking to Chamberlain did not apply. (I of course passed over the fact of Hacha's having been ordered to make this "invitation" under threat of bombardment of Prague—most Germans didn't know this as it was not revealed in the Nazi Press, and my assertion of it would have appeared as "provocation".) Perhaps not sufficiently appreciating the Führer's point of view, I said, England regarded the occupation of Czechoslovakia as a violation of agreement and looked around for allies who would assist in preventing further similar acts. Hence the lamentable advances made to Russia. "Thus," I concluded, "I regard the

whole situation that has arisen as a deplorable misunderstanding."

This neutral presentation of the case usually served to obviate a clash. I brought it forward now in answer to the Gestapo chief—wishing to heaven he wouldn't talk politics but would give me my permit and have done with it! But he was not going to let the chance slip of talking to an Englishman—a rare opportunity in 1939. Why was England so set upon war? he wanted to know. I protested mildly and said England was pacific. He snorted. Then why was our foreign policy dictated by Duff Cooper, Eden and Churchill? I said it wasn't, that that was a false impression. But this challenge to the infallibility of Dr. Goebbels was a dangerous move on my part. He insisted it was the only explanation of our policy of "encirclement", that England hated Germany so relentlessly that she was resolved to annihilate her, that so base were our intentions that we were not above leaguering ourselves even with the Bolsheviks, that we had surrendered our free will to the machinations of international Jewry, and so on and so forth. He spoke with increasing warmth, striding to and fro behind his desk. I was glad the interview was developing into a monologue which relieved me of the need for arguing or even replying, since every reply that was not a surrender involved impugning the good faith of the Führer and his apostles, and I hoped to goodness that delivery of my permit did not depend upon the outcome of our dispute! My interjections were monosyllabic and conciliatory. I readily conceded the "errors and injustices of Versailles". But none the less I felt, despite myself, a rising irritation. Finally, when he was denouncing Britain's "theft" of the German colonies as a "criminal injustice" I was provoked to answer back,

though I felt I risked all I had at stake. I broke right into his peripatetic tirade: "*Aber hören Sie mal, Herr Kommissar*, your Führer said in his Reichstag speech in April¹ that he had the greatest admiration for the British Empire, and he said he knew perfectly well that the empire was acquired *by conquest*, by violence, even by brutal violence. Well, we took your colonies from you *by conquest*, in exactly the way your Führer says he so much admires, so why should you complain? Besides, *you* started that war, so where is the 'injustice'?"

I thought: Now I'm for it, he'll have me pitched out! But no. He stopped short. We remained staring at each other. There appeared on his hard, bony face a look first of perplexity, then of astonishment. He returned to his chair, reached out his hand and said: "Have you the expired permit that needs renewal?" I handed it over. "The new one will be given you downstairs." He rose. I rose also. "It has been very interesting talking to you," he said, extending his hand. I shook it, said "*Danke schön*", and went out into the corridor.

Quite inadvertently, and trembling at my own audacity, I had hit upon the one argument that convinces a Nazi—force!

To-day I wonder often and often what would that man have said, and the many others who spoke to me in the same strain, if they had been told that their Führer within a few weeks would swear a pact of lasting friendship with the "Jewish Bolsheviks" for whom no epithets had ever been sufficiently abusive.

I was shown downstairs into a hall where an official sat at a table receiving applicants for permits to the Protectorate. The first said he wanted a permit for a few

¹ Speech of 28th April, 1939.

hours for himself and his wife to cross the Protectorate by car to visit his dying mother in a town in a part of Sudetenland that was on the far side of the Protectorate. "Show me the doctor's certificate," said the official. The man said he had no certificate, he had only just received the telegram about his mother and that by the time he could wire for a certificate and receive it by post his mother might be dead. "I only want to drive *across* the Protectorate," he insisted, "I don't want to stop anywhere." "You can drive *round*," said the official. The man protested that that was four times as far and would take two days. "*Nichts zu machen*—nothing doing," replied the official relentlessly. "Bring a doctor's certificate or you get no permit. Heil Hitler! Next, please." And the man turned quickly away, compressing his lips, and twisting his hat in his hands.

The next applicant produced a letter from somewhere in the Protectorate showing that his presence was urgently needed regarding the sale of his property and if he did not come at once he would lose a considerable sum of money. "Take your application to the Ministry of Economics at Berlin," said the official. The man protested that to go to Berlin was a long and costly journey, whereas the place he wanted to go to was less than thirty kilometres away, "just over there"—and he pointed out of the window at the hills of the Protectorate that were clearly visible; whereas while he waited in a queue in Berlin he would lose his property in Bohemia. The official answered: "*Ich kann nichts dafür*—it can't be helped. Didn't you see the notice? 'No exceptions. Useless to ask.' Heil Hitler! Next, please."

The next applicant was similarly disposed of and I was left alone with the official. He was a middle-aged

man of mild appearance. The guard who brought me down from the chief had whispered something into his ear, and when the applicants had gone he turned to me and said: "You are an Englishman? Your countrymen were here last year helping to settle the Sudeten dispute. They were very fair. It is strange that our relations are so bad now." I said it was most regrettable. But not feeling inclined for a further argument about the matter I diverted the conversation by asking: "Why is it so difficult to obtain a permit into the Protectorate?" He hesitated for a moment, then said: "It has been ordered so"—and in his turn diverted the conversation. "The Czechs are bad people, they maltreated us when this was a part of Czechoslovakia. But we intend to return good for evil. We shall not do to them as they did to us. We shall treat them kindly and win them round to see the advantage of belonging to the Reich."

"A wise policy," I agreed.

A young lady came down the stairs bringing my permit. She was good-looking as German girls go (good-looking girls are now strangely rare in Germany), and smiled charmingly as she gave me the green card. "Valid for two weeks. Heil Hitler!" she said. I thanked her and prepared to go. The official rose and extended his hand. "*Gute Reise*, Heil Hitler!" he said. "*Danke schön*, Heil Hitler!" I replied.

At the entrance I handed back to the porter the slip he had given me, marked with the time of my entry. The iron gate clanged noisily aside.

"Heil Hitler!"

"Heil Hitler!"—and the gate swung back behind me with a bang.

I went straight to the station, anxious to escape from

this town. When I had bought my ticket and calculated how much petty cash I would need on the journey I put all my German paper money in a plain envelope and posted it to myself at Berlin, leaving in my pocket between ten and fifteen marks in cash. The reason for this was that ten marks was the maximum one was allowed to take across the frontier, for the Government were resolved that even those who were permitted to enter the Protectorate should not be able to purchase anything there with German money. Fortunately in Prague I had some Czech money. Pegged to the mark, the Czech crown was still the official currency. As for the superfluous German money which I sent back to Berlin, I found dispatch in a plain envelope as a simple letter the surest way of recovering it. The currency regulations were devised to keep track of the financial holdings, even small, of foreigners; according to law all sums above ten marks had to be surrendered to a bank on crossing the frontier, and to avoid confiscation of sums of over a hundred marks a permit had to be obtained from the Deutsche Bank. These restrictions, had I adhered to them, would have caused me great embarrassment. I have no doubt some people smuggled money into the Protectorate, and got away with it. But I wished to run no risks. *Devisenschmuggeln*—currency smuggling—was a capital offence, and had I been the unfortunate victim who at the frontier was occasionally dropped upon and searched, it would have sadly upset my relations with the Gestapo, not to speak of bringing down on my head even more serious troubles.

I FOUND Bock to be a young and ardent Nazi of about twenty-eight or nine, a junior director in a bank of which his father had been president. He hailed from a distant part of Germany to which he returned before war broke out, and in Prague seemed like a fish out of water. He disliked the Czechs, and being himself of a sensitive nature felt their sullen resentment and hatred keenly. No doubt he wished them well enough in his heart, and believed it was part of the Germanic mission to Germanize the "backward and inferior" Slavs. In the many conversations I had with him he often likened them to children of the lower forms in a school in which Germany was the rightful schoolmaster, and if they would not behave themselves properly—according to Nazi lights—then they must be chastised into doing so. He said this without malice, in perfect sincerity believing it to be the truth.

He idolized Hitler. He had never seen him, although he had belonged to the party for over ten years, since his teens. But Hitler was to him what he was to thousands of other Nazis and even non-Nazis—a divinely sent prophet whose mission was to restore the German people to their rightful place as the cultural and racial leaders of mankind. To Rudolf Bock the hymn *Deutschland über alles* was no mere patriotic ditty. It represented the pith and marrow of German aspirations.

With all this typical ingrained Nazi chauvinism he had at the same time a touching and genuine love for England. He had spent a year in London and some

months in America and spoke English tolerably well. To him England was beyond all doubt the next best thing in the world to Germany—which in his view was saying a very great deal. The existing alliance of Germany with Italy and Japan seemed to him to be contrary to nature and logic. He despised the Italians and detested the Japs. Constantly he reverted to the theme of an Anglo-German alliance. Britain and Germany should parcel out the globe between them, keep all the other nations in leash, and thus impose a lasting and “constructive” peace upon the world. Their first common task, of course, would be to exterminate Stalin and his horde of Bolshevik gangsters. Rudolf Bock waxed eloquent on this aspect of the Anglo-German duty to the world. It was a source of profound perplexity to him that England should so far have lost her national dignity and sense of the fitness of things as to make overtures to Moscow. That was one thing the Führer would never do! I shall never forget the force with which the worthy young man made this declaration. The Führer was the heaven-sent apostle of anti-Bolshevism, he had declared that of all governments in the world there was only one with which he would never under any circumstances ally himself in friendship, namely the present band of Kremlin criminals. In Rudolf Bock’s eyes the proper place for England in this noble crusade was at Germany’s side. Not Japan, not Italy, not puny states like Hungary should have been the first co-members with Germany of the Anti-Comintern Pact, but Britain.

At the same time, thoroughly Nazi though he was in his adulation of the Führer, he was singularly frank in his criticisms of the shortcomings of the administration. In particular he denounced its bureaucracy, and said it

was becoming next to impossible to get anything done on account of the multiplicity of forms and papers that had to be filled up even in the most trivial matters. There was also much self-seeking and place-snatching. Instead of single-minded devotion to the cause many members sought first for position and power, and there was much jealousy between various organizations and departments.

Oddly enough, with all his idealism Bock had a deep admiration for the Gestapo—a peculiar phenomenon which I had noticed in equally sincere Communists with regard to the Cheka-Ogpu. Instead of revealing the innate weakness and artificiality of a regime that required such an unscrupulous prop, in Bock's eyes the Gestapo represented its strength. He did not deny its ruthlessness and brutality, but defended and even praised these methods on grounds of exigency, especially in the struggle against the Jews. Coached by the penetrating propaganda of Dr. Goebbels, he did not fail to remind me that the British Empire also had been built up solely "by measures of extreme barbarity and oppression". Like every well-bred Nazi he had at the tip of his tongue an exhaustive list of Britain's past sins, going back a couple of hundred years or so, and though he recited these without the venom which the rulers have instilled into the minds of Germany's present-day youth, yet it was clear that he regarded them as refuting any claims Britain may now put forward to champion more peaceful methods. He did not criticize the violence and brutality with which Britain was reputed to have achieved her dominant position; what he criticized was our supposed denial of these methods and our "hypocritical" championship of freedom and good neighbourliness as the principles which should henceforth govern international relations.

"It is easy enough to be peaceful-minded when you already own nearly a quarter of the globe," he said. "When Germany possesses as much she will be peaceful-minded too."

Rudolf Bock had none of the fawning admiration for artificial aristocracy and titles that marked his friend Dr. Bergmann. It was difficult to think of them as friends, they were so different. Perhaps it was the cheerful hail-fellow-well-met side of their characters that formed a natural bond. What Bergmann had told Bock in announcing my coming I had no means of knowing, but he was well prepared in every sense—the bargaining sense particularly.

"The bank is just as interested in finding Obry as you are," he said, "because there are certain matters in which we require his signature, and I am afraid there could be no question of releasing him until he has given it."

Blackmail! So that was to be the line. Obry was to be forced to sign away all his interests! Perhaps that was just what they were keeping him in captivity for now. I began to think it highly likely that he might have been brought back to Prague, as Bergmann supposed, and kept in secret detention with the fixed aim of blackmailing him into signing everything away. I speculated in my mind as to the possible effect of my intervention. If the matter concerned the banks and courts it would probably stiffen them to put their terms up. But my hopes were based on circumventing all official channels and appealing to the cupidity of those who could pull back-stage wires. So I repeated to Bock the suggestion I had made to Bergmann that all claims should be settled "out of court" by private arrangement and in sterling. He had evidently been prepared for this also by Bergmann. He invited me to

supper to discuss the matter. I was very pleased at this sign of accommodation. It also gave me time to prepare for the fray and to see Haller and tell him of my *démarche*.

Haller still held to the theory that Obry was keeping up his fictitious identity, and therefore that any inquiries for him as "Obry" would jeopardize his chances of escape. But the messenger he said he had sent in search of him had still not returned, and he had no alternative suggestion to put forward except to wait and do nothing.

He also feared that going through the bank would be very costly. But as he was concerned about the fate of Obry's interests he was placated when I said I intended to bargain for his release for a lump sum in sterling covering all claims. Moreover, when Haller saw that I was resolved to push the inquiry forward without his assistance if necessary, he came round to my point of view and gave me some useful suggestions as to how to bargain about Obry's interests.

When I dined with Bock that night in a quiet corner of Lippert's restaurant, where you got the best food in Prague, I tried first to fish for an indication of what sum might be acceptable as ransom. Bock said I ought to make an "offer". I parried by asking for a "hint". But he was cautious. He clearly thought that a "private arrangement" could be arrived at, but he had not yet had time to go and see the Gestapo, but had made an appointment for next morning.

I returned his invitation next evening. We sat in the same place at the same table until the small hours of the morning, two or three bottles of excellent German wine testifying to our good use of the time. Discussion of the Obry case was mixed up with arguments about politics,

reminiscences of Bock's sojourn in England, and tales of our travels.

He said he had been to the Gestapo and he was to have an answer to-morrow as to precisely where Obyr was. I again broached the terms of his release.

"What is your offer?" he asked.

Before suggesting a figure I paraded the arguments I had thought out with Haller's help during the day, and then said tentatively and as brazenly as I could:

"Ought you not to be satisfied if you get a thousand pounds to let him out?"

He laughed outright. "Now if you had started bidding at *five* times that figure I could have understood you, but a thousand——" and he laughed again ironically.

I replied to the effect that if he was going to start off with astronomical figures we had better drop the matter at once and call it a day.

"'Astronomical'," he snorted, "when the Obyr interests are worth millions?"

"I'm not buying the Obyr interests," I retorted. "I'm offering you a ransom to let a man out of jail."

Well, we beat about the bush without coming to any agreement, though by the time the evening was over I had a shrewd notion about how high the figure would finally be. But I refused to commit myself to any figure until I had "seen the goods", in other words until I had seen the missing man and was convinced he was safe and sound and had not been maltreated. I went back to the Alcron very satisfied with the evening's work, for I drew from it two conclusions; the first was that a ransom and a not too exorbitant one would be fixed, and secondly, the fact that Bock had opened negotiations for release was definite evidence that he must have been assured that

Obry was somewhere in one of the prisons of the Gestapo.

Next day he reported by telephone that the Gestapo "were still searching". Read "bargaining", I said to myself as I put the receiver down. The following day was Saturday (21st May), and when Bock reported again that the Gestapo had as yet given no reply and that nothing could be done until after the week-end, I was very annoyed. I felt they wanted to trick me into committing myself to a figure—perhaps even insist upon an advance. This put my back up. I decided to make a demonstration of firmness. So I went off to Berlin, leaving a message to Bock to communicate with me when he wished to. I hoped this would call their bluff.

Three days later I received an urgent trunk call from Prague. But it was not from Bock. It was from Haller, who in an agitated voice begged me with extreme urgency to take the night train back to Prague. His call came as I was dressing to go to a dinner-party. I put off the party and arrived back at Prague next morning in a very bad temper, having had to sit up all night in the train as I couldn't get a sleeper, and this had involved turning out at the frontier and being examined like any ordinary passenger. It was a wretched morning, cold and drizzling, and as I went along to Haller's place I cursed him for having spoilt an evening I had looked forward to and bringing me back in rank discomfort, perhaps on some fool's errand. For I had not a high opinion of Haller's detective capacities.

But my ill-temper vanished the moment I saw him. His hand shook. It was some time before he could pull himself together and speak lucidly. Finally I managed to piece together his story.

One of the men who had assisted Obry in procuring

his false passport—a Czech with one of those tongue-twisting names consisting of a medley of r's, s's, z's, n's and k's with an odd vowel thrown in, to whom we referred shortly as "Cherry"—had come to him the day before, saying he had important information to impart. He said he had been perturbed by the absence of news about Obry, and it had finally occurred to him "that an accident might have happened". If an accident had happened, then "there might be something about it in the newspapers". So—entirely upon his own initiative, he declared—he had undertaken to search the papers from the date of Obry's leaving Prague to see if he could find anything which might throw light upon the matter. And, lo and behold, he had discovered among items of local interest in a Sudetenland newspaper called *Die Zeit*, published at Reichenberg, in its issue of April 17th, exactly one week after Obry's arrest, a reference to a man called Friedrich Schweigler, who was reputed to hail from Prague. The reference was startling and in the highest degree disturbing—no less than a report of Friedrich Schweigler's suicide. Of course, said Cherry, the report might refer to some other Friedrich Schweigler, as the name was not uncommon, but the coincidence of place and date lent colour to the report, so that he had considered it his duty to come and show it to Haller immediately.

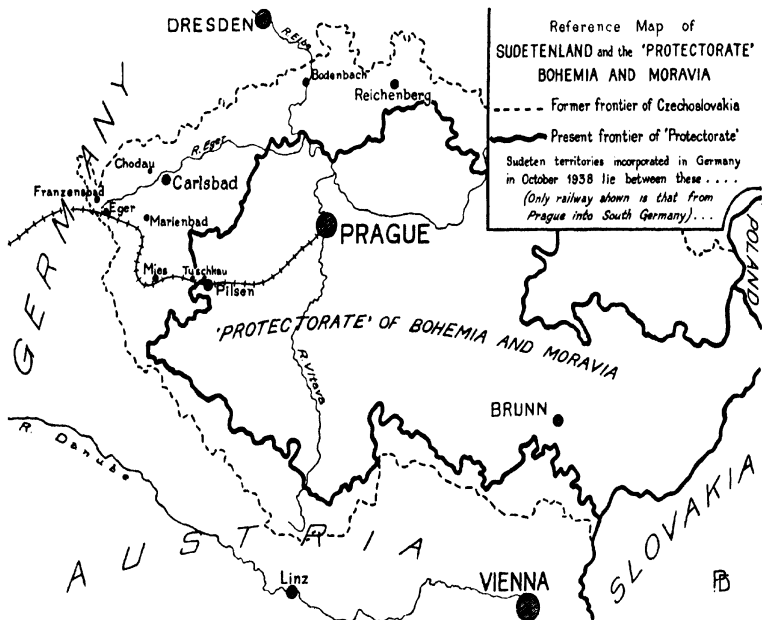
Haller produced the paper and I read the notice (to which I referred in my opening chapter) inserted among other incidental items on an inner page:

Suicide of a man from Prague. Mies. A thirteen-year-old boy found on the railway line near Tuschkau¹ the completely unrecognizable corpse of a man. The

¹ A village near the Czech frontier.

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

body was mutilated beyond recognition and the right hand was missing. The police pronounced a verdict of suicide. From papers found on the body it appeared that the individual was one Friedrich Schweigler of Prague.



I read and reread the notice, examined the title page and its heading *Die Zeit, Official Journal of the National Socialist German Labour Party of the Province of Sudetenland*, and turned again to the brief insertion, which was preceded and followed by commonplace items of local news.

"What do you make of it?" I asked Haller.

He was too distraught to express an opinion, assuming at once that it referred to Obry and was true. The only suggestion he had to make was "to denounce to the

Gestapo the men who had procured the passport". "And what good would that do?" I asked. He couldn't say. "Then do nothing of the sort," I told him, "we shall need those men."

To me the report bore the signs of a complete fabrication from start to finish. The vagueness, the absence of exact date, the double insistence on the unrecognizability of the body—these appeared to me to be calculated imprecisions and the whole story to be a canard, designed as a trap. Also the manner in which the report had been "found" by the man Cherry, several weeks after the event, seemed to me in the highest degree fishy. But as it was impossible to converse with Haller in his present condition I took the paper with me, went out to a café and ordered myself a large beer.

Presently I called up Bock to hear if he had any news of Obry as Obry. But I was told he was away for some days. Then I went back to Haller and told him I wanted to see the man Cherry. He arranged to have him come to the house of a lady to whom I will refer as Frau Ludmila, who was, I believe, a connexion of Obry's by marriage.

Accompanied by Haller I came early to Frau Ludmila. She was a charming and hospitable elderly lady, who up to that time had firmly refused to quit Prague though she could well afford to do so. She is now safe in Switzerland. She lived alone, but a gentleman who I think was a nephew was usually with her on the occasions when I saw her. This man waited outside in the street for Cherry, to make sure he should enter unobserved and without waiting.

I had strictly enjoined upon Haller not to tell Cherry he was to meet me. Cherry was to think he was being

invited simply to repeat to Frau Ludmila the story of his discovery of the *Die Zeit* report.

"Who shall I say you are?" asked Haller.

"Simply say 'Herr Dukes from London'—and by the way, be careful to pronounce my name 'Du-kess', as Czechs usually do." I had a particular reason for having my name pronounced thus, as will appear later.

Cherry arrived and was shown in. He was a little mouse-like man with a narrow pointed nose, small twinkling black eyes and a timid, almost cringing manner. He spoke German fluently and correctly but with a Slav accent. He knew Frau Ludmila and her nephew already, having met them prior to Obry's flight and again during the days immediately following. He looked inquiringly at me, evidently surprised to see a stranger.

"Herr Du-kess—*aus* London," said Haller.

I felt the little man's fingers twitch and half withdraw from my hand. He shot a sharp glance at me which I avoided. He stood irresolute for a moment as if he would like to say he would come another time to tell Frau Ludmila about the newspaper report. But she motioned him to a seat, and there was nothing to do but comply.

I had asked Frau Ludmila to place him on a little divan behind a small table at the side of the room. I sat on his left with Frau Ludmila opposite me. The nephew and Haller sat facing Cherry. The advantage of this arrangement was that I sat very close to Cherry and yet could observe everybody throughout the conversation.

"We have invited you here to hear how you discovered this newspaper report," began Frau Ludmila.

He started to speak nervously and rapidly. But Haller immediately interrupted him. Apologizing to Frau Ludmila, he said he wanted first to ask Cherry to state

"before witnesses" certain facts which led up to Obry's flight. These were that he, Haller, was not a party to procuring the false passport and that any connexion he had had with the matter was accidental; and he further wanted Cherry to admit certain details of the financial side of the transaction which Cherry disputed.

(This is all for *my* benefit, I said to myself. Why is Haller so anxious to force these points?)

It was a bad beginning to the evening, for Cherry's manner, which was timid and nervous from the first, became provocative and challenging. Haller obviously wanted to clear himself of suspicions, while Cherry felt himself to be in the dock. His face took on a hunted expression. When finally he began to narrate how he had come upon the *Die Zeit* report he was barely intelligible.

"There are many local newspapers published in Sudetenland," I said. "Please tell me the names of all the papers whose files you looked through before you looked through *Die Zeit*."

"*Die Zeit* was the first I looked through," he answered quickly.

"Indeed? Was that perspicacity, or luck? Reichenberg is two hundred kilometres from Mies."

He began to protest. But I wished to appease him and put him at his ease, for though I knew he was lying I saw we should get nothing out of him as long as he felt himself in the dock. So I said gently: "Look here, calm yourself, no one is accusing you of anything. In the Obry case I am the official inquirer" (and I watched him closely as I added in an undertone) "but you know that already——"

He flinched and was about to deny. But at the same

moment he felt, underneath the table, the firm pressure of my hand upon his knee. I gripped him tightly, and his look of fear turned to astonishment as I went on aloud without stopping: "—and I shall certainly want your help. If you will play straight by me I will play straight by you. I have nothing to gain by your getting into trouble."

He continued to stare at me in doubt, but I turned to the rest of the company and tried by my manner to show him that I took it for granted that there was an understanding between us.

We plunged into a long discussion of the *Die Zeit* report. I told Frau Ludmila emphatically I didn't believe it—it entailed too many questions and contained too many improbabilities. What were the data so far in our possession? Obry was said to have been arrested at Mies on April 10th, and on April 16th he had been credibly reported as released. Then why should he be travelling not onward to Switzerland but back toward Prague, as the *Die Zeit* report indicated, for it said the body had been discovered near Tuschkau, a village right on the Protectorate frontier, Mies being thirty kilometres to the west.

Haller suggested that he might by accident have got on a wrong train. The nephew said: But if he had successfully kept up his fictitious rôle for nearly a week how could he have been so absent-minded as to get on a wrong train when his life depended on it? Frau Ludmila said: He was never absent-minded. Haller said: In the excitement of the moment he might have been. Nephew said: Anyway why kill himself? Haller said: Of course he didn't kill himself, he tried to jump off the train when he noticed his mistake. I suggested he might have been conducted back to Prague under escort and jumped out to

escape, and this would account for his being near the Protectorate frontier. Cherry said: If you wanted to jump off a train to save yourself you would choose a place where there was a grassy embankment that you could roll down, you wouldn't jump under the train and get mangled. Haller said: How do you jump *under* a train when you are travelling *on* it? Nephew said there were some trains with communicating coaches such that you could throw yourself out between the coaches. Cherry said: If there was a death there must have been a burial and a priest to perform it; if we could find the priest we could check up on the report; they were Catholics in that district, and he was a Catholic; if he could go to Tuschkau he could nose around and interrogate the local priests.

When this futile discussion had gone on for some time, Frau Ludmila said suddenly: "What about his luggage?"

"Luggage? Did he have any luggage?"

"Yes. It was a sort of black suit-case."

Frau Ludmila was as positive that he did have this "sort of black suit-case" as she was vague about its size, shape and contents. But she was certain that in the days preceding his flight he had purchased an entirely new outfit so as to have nothing with him bearing his initials. Anyway, if this newspaper report did refer to him, where was the suit-case? Had it been left in the train? Or had he thrown it out before he jumped? All agreed that the suit-case would be a major clue. If it had been found at the side of the line it would mean he had jumped out to save himself, but if it was found in the train it would suggest that he had really thrown himself out to kill himself.

The discussion turned round and round, and it didn't make our speculations any clearer when Haller suggested

that if Obry had revealed his identity to Madame Prosser why shouldn't he have revealed it also to others of his co-prisoners, who might have given him away. For a moment we sat in gloom considering this suggestion. So I threw out desperately: "One of those co-prisoners might have stolen his papers, and the dead man may have been someone totally different." This wild effort, which Cherry supported, cheered everybody up, and spirits soared still further when I added that it was really silly to attach any significance at all to the *Die Zeit* report, as I had good reason to believe that Obry was safely in the hands of the Gestapo right there in Prague.

I felt that Cherry looked at me very curiously when I said this, but I avoided meeting his eyes.

"I have good grounds for this belief, which Herr Haller knows," I said to Frau Ludmila, "but you must excuse me if I don't say anything about that now."

I had let everybody talk because I wanted to hear what everybody said, especially Cherry. When we were separating I took him aside and asked him for his telephone number. I didn't want to ask Haller for it because I didn't want Haller to know I intended to telephone Cherry at all.

Next day I drove to Brünn with Haller and visited there some of Obry's friends. Having cleared himself, as he thought, in my eyes of any complicity in the Obry conspiracy, Haller had become more amenable and anxious to help me to see whom I liked. I did not have time to see all Obry's friends at Brünn, and those I did see had nothing to tell. But Haller said a gentleman he had seen had produced a post card from Vienna, which the recipient believed referred to Obry and showed that three weeks earlier he had been at Vienna. I paid little

attention to this rumour, believing that through Bock I was fairly sure now of being on Obry's track.

We drove back to Prague next day, counting the huge German motor-lorries returning to Germany with booty taken from the Czechs. Forty of these great lorries with trailers, each with a load of about ten tons, were passed on the 250 kilometres of road between Brünn and Prague, loaded mainly with timber, iron ware and textiles. Considering that this was on one single stretch of road during four hours of driving, and that it had been taking place day and night on all roads out of Czechoslovakia for over two months since the occupation, one got some idea of the spoliation the Czechs were suffering at the hands of their "Protectors".

Back at Prague I telephoned to Bock, to be told, however, that he had returned to the bank for a few hours only before going away for Whitsun. I thought it curious that he had left no message for me, but there was nothing to be done about it. He was the only contact I had so far with the Prague Gestapo, and I could not pursue the negotiations except through him. I tried to get Bergmann on the telephone, but with the same ill success.

So I resolved to get hold of the man Cherry, alone, to question him. But I feared this might not be easy, for I knew he was still afraid of me—he had given me his telephone number reluctantly, and would most likely seek to avoid me. It was very unlikely that he would answer the telephone himself, for in view of his shady activities he would always be on the watch for traps. So I decided to say, when ringing, that it was Haller who wanted to speak to him—though in point of fact it was just Haller who must not know I was communicating with Cherry. But how otherwise could I trick Cherry into coming to the

telephone? Haller, however, would have spoken to Cherry in Czech, whereas I could only speak German. So I went into a café I frequented where the cloakroom woman knew me, and told her to obtain the number. "Ask for this gentleman," I said, and wrote out the tongue-twisting name on a slip of paper. "And if they ask who wants him, say 'Herr Haller'." She did so. A woman's voice sounded at the other end. As I expected, she wanted particularly to know who was inquiring. "Herr Haller," my female announced. "Say it is urgent," I whispered into her ear. There was a pause. At last I heard Cherry's voice. I seized the receiver. "*Guten Tag, Herr Cherry, es spricht Herr Du-kess.*" He was clearly disconcerted to hear it was me. But he couldn't get out of it, and agreed to meet me at one of those secluded cafés tucked away among the maze of passages and tunnels with which the old houses of Prague are honeycombed.

I preferred that he should be there first, so I came late and peered through the glass doors to see where he was sitting and make sure he was alone. A young woman coming out turned and looked at me with curiosity. Realizing that my behaviour must seem odd I pushed my way in.

Cherry was there and had found a secluded table in an alcove. We were able to talk without fear of disturbance.

I felt sure this man was what the Germans would call a *kleiner Schieber*, a sort of petty sharper, the kind of fellow who might act as a receiver of stolen goods or swindlers' go-between. He might seek to justify his conspirative dealings with the Gestapo to his own people on patriotic grounds as undermining German authority when really the only motive was their lucrativeness. He and his associates had been heavily paid by Obry for procuring

the Friedrich Schweigler passport. But he would be keenly alive to his own personal safety, and I suspected that this was what had prompted him to come running to Haller with the *Die Zeit* report, of which he must have known far earlier, but which he and his associates had decided to say nothing about as long as Obry's friends had not noticed it. Through his Gestapo friends he must have heard that Obry was being searched for by somebody specially sent from England. My name might have come to his ears. If so, it would certainly have been pronounced "Du-kess", as Czechs and Germans generally pronounced it, and this was why I had told Haller, when he was introducing Cherry to me, to pronounce my name in this way so that I might observe its effect on him.

But while I was under no delusions about him I saw no advantage at all in doing anything whatever against him, even if he proved to have been partly responsible for Obry's capture. Haller's impulse to denounce all the people implicated was sheer folly, for they would be our source of information regarding the "back door" workings of the Gestapo.

"So I want you to understand," I said to Cherry, "that I have no intention of getting you into trouble, and if you will tell me the whole truth I give you my word I will do everything I can for you."

He began to protest that he *had* told the truth. I checked him impatiently. "Don't think me such a fool! Local newspapers are published in Sudetenland at lots of towns nearer to Mies than Reichenberg is. Eger, Carlsbad, Marienbad, Aussig, Bodenbach, are all nearer, and the appearance of this report in a paper at Reichenberg, two hundred kilometres away, right at the other end of

Sudetenland, is one of the things I want explained. If you had searched the Press at all you would have started with the papers nearest to Mies. But you never did search the Press"—he tried to interrupt, but I insisted—"you simply heard from the Gestapo that inquiries were being made about Obry and you got the wind-up and came running along hoping to put yourself right with Haller by showing him the paper. You had known of it all along. Own up."

He squirmed, but still protested feebly.

"Stop it." I began to be really angry. "Do you expect me to believe that for six weeks you waited, and then of your own accord, without even consulting Herr Haller, you undertook the huge task of searching through all the back numbers of all the papers in Sudetenland for a month and a half on the off chance that there might be a reference to an insignificant tailor, and that you chose to look first through a paper published two hundred kilometres away from the place where any accident could have happened?"

He crumpled up. I called the waiter and ordered him a large sherry—he had until then refused anything but coffee.

"Forgive me," he said abjectly. "I had told that story to Herr Haller, so at Frau Ludmila's I had to repeat the same to you. How could I change it in front of him?"

"Of course, of course," I reassured him. "Did I challenge you when others were present though I knew you were lying?" I made him look me straight in the face, and practised a little impressive suggestion upon him. "Listen, you *cannot* conceal the truth from me. I shall *always* know when you lie. If you tell all the truth

I give you my word I will protect you even if I myself run risk in doing so, but if you lie again I will——”

I was going to say I would show him up mercilessly, but, terrified, he gripped my arm to interrupt my threat. “I will not lie to you”—and he crossed himself—“but to tell all the truth is different. There are others in the affair.”

“To me they are the same as you,” I said impatiently, but appreciating his last remark none the less. “I promise you that no person you mention will get into any trouble through me—on the contrary, I’ll help you if I can. Now tell me the whole story of Obry’s papers from the beginning.”

He began to unfold a tangled and complex tale which I had difficulty in unravelling. He spoke at first in a faltering voice but gradually recovered confidence as I prompted and encouraged him. He told me how, at the time of the occupation of Prague by the Nazis, a friend of his (whom I will here call Stepan) had found in the Gestapo a couple of German acquaintances who were not averse to making money by facilitating the smuggling of foreign currency out of the country. This was done through couriers sent by the Gestapo to secret Gestapo centres in Switzerland. Such couriers were naturally exempt from all examination on the German side and found it easy to smuggle out almost any sum they liked. Moreover, the Gestapo always had a supply of false passports for them.

A day or two after the occupation Cherry had recognized a man he knew standing in the queue of would-be emigrants and travellers waiting outside the Gestapo to procure the special permit required to cross the Protectorate frontier. Learning that this man wanted to

get the frontier permit, for which he might have to wait several days and even then be refused, Cherry offered to get it for him quicker through his "back door" friends. The operation was effected with success. This man happened to be a friend of Obry's, and told Obry about it. The result was that others of Obry's friends took advantage of the same "back door" facilities and were safely sent over the frontier before the end of March. There was, of course, no question of their using false passports. Their usual passports were in order, it was only a question of obtaining more quickly the supplementary Protectorate-frontier permit which the Germans had instituted.

With Obry, however, the situation was quite different. He was in trouble with the Nazis and was under police supervision. Hence the idea of flight in disguise. What more natural than that he also should address himself for assistance to Cherry and Stepan who had helped his friends. Stepan was the active contact with the Gestapo in these operations, while Cherry, if his words were to be trusted, was merely the go-between. After secret consultation with the Gestapo "back door" the business was declared feasible and a large sum agreed upon and paid by Obry in advance. Cherry swore earnestly that his share of this had been miserably small because the Gestapo men "had such huge appetites", but "times were bad and he was glad of even small earnings".

Easter (Good Friday was on April 7th) was almost upon them by the time these negotiations had reached a successful conclusion and a possible passport had been procured from the supply kept at the Gestapo for couriers. Still being only under house arrest, Obry resolved to profit by the relaxed supervision during the Easter holidays to

make his flight. Accordingly Good Friday found him in Prague already in the early hours of the morning, hiding in a friend's house. Cherry brought him the proposed passport from the Gestapo to see if he thought it would do. It was of a recently deceased tailor called Schweigler, who had travelled a good deal between Vienna, Budapest and Prague, so it had a lot of *visas* on it. Obry said it would do if his own photo was substituted for that of the late owner. The substitution was effected to perfection, the operation being performed secretly somewhere within the offices of the Gestapo, and on Easter Sunday Cherry brought the finished article to Obry, together with the frontier permit to accompany it. "Herr Obry," said Cherry, "asked me if I could find out something about the real Friedrich Schweigler so that he could invent a story to support his disguise. But how could that be done on an Easter Sunday? I could find out nothing at all."

"When did you next hear of Obry?"

"Two days later, after the unknown woman brought the scrap of paper to Herr Haller from Mies."

Unknown woman? Was there still another mystery woman in the case besides Madame Prosser?

"What 'unknown woman'? What 'scrap of paper'?"

He looked at me with surprise. "Didn't you know? The day after Herr Obry left, a woman coming from Germany brought Herr Haller a scrap of paper which she said an elderly man had given her, asking her to transmit it to Haller. On it was scribbled in pencil in Obry's handwriting: 'Arrested on account of papers.' He had also borrowed from her three marks which she asked Haller to refund to her."

I was loth to reveal to Cherry that Haller had suppressed this incident from me, but I couldn't help it. The

whole thing seemed incredible. And the ridiculous loan of three marks! The millionaire Obry, borrowing three marks!

I pressed Cherry for details. The woman had said, he went on, that in travelling back from abroad to the Protectorate she had been taken out of the train at Mies for examination at the Mies Gestapo. There had been a crowd of arrested people there, and among these an elderly gentleman whose name she didn't know, but who, when he overheard that she was going back to Prague, had taken her aside and implored her to do him a great service on which his life might depend. He had torn a leaf out of his pocket book, hastily scribbled on it the words "Arrested on account of papers", and begged her to deliver it to Haller whose address he told her. This entreaty had been supplemented by another for the loan of any—even the smallest—sum of money, which would be refunded to her by Haller. She supposed the Gestapo must have taken his money from him. She had very little herself, however, and all she could spare was three marks.

"What did Haller do with the scrap of paper?" I asked.

"I don't know."

"How did you get to hear about it?"

"Haller showed me it. We went straight to Frau Ludmila to consult as to what we could do to get Herr Obry freed."

Why on earth had Haller not told me of this incident? That Frau Ludmila had not mentioned it was not strange—she would assume that Haller had told me of it.

After this, Cherry proceeded, he and Stepan had appealed to their Gestapo friends to take the necessary

measures to get Obry released. It was clearly in all their interests to bring this about as quickly as possible, for if Obry under cross-examination were to give away how he had come by his false papers they would all be in the soup. There had already been one big corruption scandal at the Prague Gestapo at the end of March, Cherry said, when some officials had even been shot and others dismissed. If the facts of Obry's passport came to light they knew what they had to expect. So they naturally did their utmost. Upon inquiry things did not look so bad as at first sight. It was reported that he had been arrested with five others because it was suspected that there were smugglers among them. The passport and frontier permit had nothing to do with it, and Obry's message about being arrested on account of his papers must have been his first assumption before he heard the formal charge. Obry, of course, had not been smuggling, either goods or money. All the money he had taken with him was the regulation allowance of ten marks, and if this had been taken from him it would account for his borrowing even so trivial a sum as three marks. Upon examination, therefore, he would certainly be released. And, indeed, on the Friday following his arrest it was reported that all those arrested on Easter Monday would be released next day, on Saturday. Meanwhile, Frau Ludmila, through a Czech police official of her acquaintance whom she trusted, had also made inquiries and received what seemed to be confirmation that those arrested on Easter Monday would shortly be released.

"And when did you hear definitely of Obry's release?"

"Not for about another week. First there was the unexplained telephone call from Chodau."

really by the Gestapo who had then listened in on Novak's telephone to see if there would be any reaction and then demanded of Novak "who had telephoned to him?"—the object of this complicated proceeding being to catch Novak in some conspirative conversation. But this left unexplained how Schweigler's name came into the matter, or why Haller had been the recipient of the call. Had Obry perhaps given himself away and revealed Haller's telephone number, which the Gestapo then rang up using Schweigler's name as a bait to catch accomplices?

Speculations on the matter became far too intricate to be clearly followed. The immediate effect on Obry's friends in Prague was to give their spirits a damping. But next day, on April 24th, exactly two weeks after his arrest, the Gestapo "back door" reported categorically that he had been released from Mies on the 16th, as promised. Stepan said he had personally seen the list of people released on that day and Friedrich Schweigler was one of them. He had been *completely* released—there had been no question of sending him to a concentration camp, and it was inexplicable how his name should have been quoted from Chodau. Haller, it was conjectured, had perhaps not correctly heard the name. Anyway, the assurance of release on the 16th was made so positively that Frau Ludmila and Haller had resolved to wire it to the friends in Switzerland to whom Obry had first intended to go.

"Did they sign the telegram?"

"No. They asked me to send it, unsigned."

"Why didn't they send it off themselves?"

"Because they thought it unwise that the name of any relative or friend of Herr Obry should appear on the back

of the form, where the sender's name has to be put."

Cherry said he couldn't remember for certain what the wording of the telegram was, but when I wrote out on a piece of paper the words: "Friedrich Schweigler continued journey on sixteenth look for him at Basle", which it will be remembered were the words of the enigmatic unsigned telegram dated April 24th which had caused so much perplexity in London, he said: "Yes, I believe those were the precise words."

So this at least was explained—the mysterious telegram which Weir had shown me. Why had Haller not told me of it? And why had he not told me of the telephone call from Chodau? He had simply said evasively that there had been so many telegrams and telephone calls that he couldn't remember them all. Was it likely he could have forgotten such an incident as the Chodau call? All this would have to be cleared up, but first I wanted to get the rest of Cherry's story.

"But what about the *Die Zeit* report? How did you really come to see that?"

He looked confused. It embarrassed him to own up on this matter. But he admitted that Stepan had told him of it three weeks ago, about the end of April. Stepan had heard about it from the courier who went to Carlsbad to look for Friedrich Schweigler at Chodau. This courier said he had been told at Carlsbad that there had been a report about a man of the name of Schweigler committing suicide somewhere. It had been given to a Reichenberg reporter to include in the Carlsbad column of the Reichenberg newspaper. But there was no evidence that this Schweigler was Obry, and the courier had been unable to ask any more questions lest he should draw suspicion upon himself. Stepan had told Cherry he didn't believe

the report referred to Obry, but if it did the safest thing was to say nothing about it. So Cherry had accordingly said nothing about it. Only when a week ago he and Stepan had heard that someone important (namely, me) had begun an inquiry "from above"—a "front door" inquiry, so to speak—he thought he had better look up the report for himself. It had taken him very little time to find it and he had at once told Haller about it. "So you see, Herr Du-kess, that I really was partly telling the truth when I said I looked up the back numbers, and even that I did it on my own initiative."

I began to feel a sneaking liking for this wretched little man, so fearful for his own skin at the hands of the terrible Nazi inquisition if his participation in these machinations were discovered, yet so desirous now to put himself right with me. His narrative had not been so consecutive as I have recorded it, of course; in fact it had been very tangled, and I had had to interrupt and cross-question him many times on details. But on the whole I felt that he wanted to make a clean breast to me of his part in the proceedings, and that on the whole he had probably told the truth. In any case, on some matters such as the unknown woman's message the day after Obry's flight and the mysterious telephone call from Chodau I should be able to get confirmation from Frau Ludmila. But what perplexed me most was why Haller, who had been asked by Obry's London relatives to give me every assistance, had concealed so much from me. Was it unnatural that I began to harbour grave doubts about him? In this I did him an injustice, as will be seen, but my suspicions were natural enough at the time.

I extracted from Cherry a promise (willingly given) that our conversation should remain a secret from Haller,

and I arranged to meet him again next evening at the same place together with his friend Stepan. Then I went back to my hotel puzzling greatly over what I had learnt.

Next morning, again without letting Haller know, I called on Frau Ludmila and asked her for her account of events. She was vague about dates and days and had no sense of proportion as regards the important and the unimportant. But on the whole her narrative confirmed Cherry's, particularly with regard to the message brought by the unknown woman and the Chodau telephone call and also the telegram to Switzerland. Sounding her delicately, I found she had a blind trust in Haller, who helped her in some of her affairs and had only a day or two before arranged some difficult matter in her favour. Not desiring to shake this trust in so far as it was well founded, I did not tell her of the striking hiatuses in Haller's account of events as given to me. As for Cherry, she was sure "he was not a bad fellow underneath"—but Frau Ludmila, I believe, was one of those rare souls incapable of ever thinking ill of anybody.

When I repaired to the café again to join Cherry and Stepan as arranged, I found Cherry alone. Stepan, he said, had got into trouble. He had been caught in one of his smuggling escapades. He had managed to give his pursuers the slip, but had had "to go underground", sleeping at a different place every night and never at home. For the moment his Gestapo "back door" friends were unable to help him, having to think of their own skins. There was a big panic in conspirative circles, Cherry said, because the Nazis were resolved to purge both the Gestapo and the Czech police of saboteurs. Everybody had the wind up since the scandal at the end of March. Cherry himself was obviously affected by this

atmosphere and terrified lest his association with the saboteurs should be discovered. I again gave him my word that if ever I got a chance to help in any way I would and that he need not fear that I should betray him. I tried to assure him that I sympathized with his conspirative activities—as indeed I did!

These events had detained me longer in Prague than I wished, for Whitsun was approaching and I wanted to return to London. But I still had Haller to put through a grilling. When I called him next day I found he had gone away for the holidays without leaving me any message. This annoyed me exceedingly and intensified my suspicions regarding him, but there was nothing to be done about it—then. It was Saturday, May 27th, and my own plans had been quite upset. But I took the night train from Prague and the midday 'plane from Berlin and dined in London Whitsunday evening. When I saw Weir I withheld my doubts about Haller, not yet having had a chance to demand the latter's explanations, but I was not surprised to hear Weir say spontaneously that Haller's behaviour had puzzled Obry's London friends, especially by a lot of unexplained telephoning and telegraphing all over Europe.

I had urgent matters which I had neglected in Berlin and returned there on Wednesday evening. I intended to settle them as hurriedly as possible and get along with the Obry case, which now engrossed my mind. I decided to consult the wily Franz again about it. But in hastening back to Berlin I counted without the periodical celebrations and forced festivities that so frequently paralysed life in the Nazi capital. Prince Paul of Yugoslavia arrived for the official visit which I mentioned in my opening chapter. I awoke on June 2nd to the blare

of trumpets and the roar of aeroplanes. All shops were shut, all offices closed. And the following day it was just the same. All business was at a standstill. It was useless to attempt to visit anybody. But neither had I any taste for the military parades. And thus it came about that while tanks trundled, troops tramped, and aeroplanes roared, I made my way in the other direction until I reached the Schlossplatz, installed myself beneath an awning outside the little bar opposite the ex-Kaiser's palace, and settled down to beer and contemplation. And quickly tiring, as I have said, of speculations as to what the ex-occupant of that palace might be thinking of his strange successor who at that moment was bawling stridently into a microphone two or three miles away at Charlottenburg in an effort to bamboozle Prince Paul as well as the German nation, I spread out on the table before me the copy of *Die Zeit* of April 17th containing the reference to the supposed suicide of Friedrich Schweigler, and set seriously to work to unravel the tangled knot of conflicting data concerning that individual, and devise a means of elucidating whether he was really Alfred Obry and what had really happened to him.

PART II

THE SOLUTION

VI

How much did I know? My early theories had been shaken, but the new data were not much more helpful. The elusive Madame Prosser's message from Paris, which I had thought fictitious, had received strange corroboration from the "scrap of paper" message brought to Haller by the unknown woman who said she had "lent three marks to an elderly gentleman"; so Madame Prosser's report regarding Obry's arrest in the train must be accepted as founded on fact unless the scrap of paper message proved to be an invention.

But the arrested man's fate thereafter was the subject of the most contradictory reports. I tried still to cling to the belief that he was alive but unable to communicate—a belief based upon the positive manner in which Bock had approached the subject of ransom. Bock had tried to beat me up in my offer like an auctioneer! To me this was the most hopeful of all signs, showing he knew definitely that the Gestapo had Obry in their possession. And special weight was lent to this theory by the fact that Bock only started bargaining *after* he had been to the Gestapo.

As alternative possibilities there remained, firstly, internment elsewhere than in Prague; secondly, the report of a friend at Brunn who believed Obry was at Vienna; and thirdly, the possibility that after his release on the 16th an accident had happened to him somewhere between Mies and the Swiss frontier of which we had no information.

In summing up, the most disquieting element was the fact that, except for the scrap of paper message, not a word had been received from Obry himself directly or indirectly in all the seven weeks since his disappearance. People in concentration camps were usually allowed to communicate, and if he had been interned and yet had not communicated, then either he was for some special reason forbidden to do so—in a Prague prison this would be likely—or else he was seriously ill, or else he was still keeping up his fictitious identity and feared to give anybody away by addressing a letter to them as from “Friedrich Schweigler”, or invoke danger to himself by inviting a reply from a source that could be followed up by the Gestapo.

To the actual *Die Zeit* report, assuming for the moment that it did refer to Obry, I attached no credence. I leant strongly to the theory that the Gestapo had discovered his real identity, sent him back to Prague where he was held in captivity, and meanwhile, as he had given nobody away and it had been discovered by inquiry that his wife and family had already fled, the Gestapo had put out this provocative newspaper report to induce his accomplices to betray themselves. The “unrecognizability” of the corpse was the loophole the Gestapo left for any subsequent equivocation.

A further circumstance supported this theory. There was evidence both through the Gestapo “back door” and Frau Ludmila’s friends’ inquiries that Obry was alive on the 16th April, the day of his reported release. This was a Sunday. Now even if he had been released in the morning, examination of the times of trains from Mies to Tuschkau showed that he could not have reached Tuschkau (near which village the body was reported to have been

found) until about ten o'clock. Time would elapse before "the boy" referred to in *Die Zeit* discovered the corpse; more time before he reported his discovery to the police; more time again before the police and doctor could have reached the spot, made the necessary investigation and drawn up their report; and more time again before the body was brought back to Mies. There the verdict would probably have to be pronounced by a magistrate. It seemed to me next to impossible that all this should have happened on a Sunday. And yet, for the report of it to appear in the Press on Monday morning as it had done, not only must all this have been duly completed on the Sunday, but the report of it had also been sent to Carlsbad and from Carlsbad to Reichenberg, all in time to go to press about seven or eight o'clock in the evening! The thing seemed quite fantastic.

Having racked my brain throughout the morning of June 2nd over half a dozen large Pilseners, I had a light lunch and went to the Berlin Aquarium (one of my favourite haunts) in the afternoon and a film in the evening, hoping that the distractions of marine marvels might inspire me to solve my problem, or the intricacies of a criminal romance shed light on it. But the mysteries of submarine life gave me no help, and the crude artificialities of the film only annoyed me. I went to bed with a headache.

The week-end had now arrived. I invited a lady friend to go for an outing, hoping to put the Obry affair out of my mind. We went into the country to a château that has been turned into a restaurant amidst a lovely park. After lunch we strolled in the woods and finally lay down in the hot sun by the lake for a siesta. My companion dozed. I lay staring at the cloudless sky. All the circum-

stances of the Obry case, banished for a few hours, again began to churn in my brain. But the warm sun did its kindly work. I too dozed and fell asleep.

I sat up to find my companion eyeing me curiously.

"*Was heisst 'etwas Mörder'?* What does '*etwas Mörder*' mean?" she asked. "You said it aloud when you were asleep."

"'*Etwas Mörder*'? It doesn't make sense," I replied.

Then it flashed upon me that I must have said in my sleep the words, "It was murder"! And at the same moment I jumped up and exclaimed in good healthy English: "Good God, perhaps it *was* murder!"

"Are you crazy?" my companion demanded, observing me with alarm.

I apologized and hurriedly invented as explanation for my conduct that I had been reading a detective novel which left a death unexplained, and I thought I had found the solution! Whereupon she had to hear what the story was, and I spent a bad quarter of an hour extemporizing a detective tale to satisfy her and prevent her asking further questions. "I think it is a very bad story," she said before I was half through. So did I, but even a bad lie can sometimes be a very present help in trouble. Twice later during the day I suffered chiding for my abstraction, and was told I was silly to bother about so ridiculous a story. But by the time we were back in Berlin I saw the possibilities of the Obry case in an entirely new light.

The crux of the matter lay in the pencilled scrap of paper which, according to Frau Ludmila and Cherry, had been brought to Haller by the unknown woman on April 11th. The message was said to contain the words: "Arrested on account of papers." Haller had

suppressed this incident from me. Could he have invented it at the time for some purpose of his own? Could he himself have scribbled the message and then added the bit about a loan of three marks to make the story more realistic? If so, why had he subsequently dropped it? And if not, why had nothing more been said about it? Was it that the successful flight from the Protectorate of several of Obry's friends had given everyone such confidence in Cherry and Stepan and the Gestapo "back door" that the message was ignored? Or was it that attention became focused upon the report from the Gestapo of suspected smuggling, a charge which in Obry's case was bound to be quickly refuted? The "positive assurance" of his release a few days later seemed to have led everyone to forget about that scrap of paper. Cherry had been the first to speak of it, and I had had to meet him secretly to hear about the real course of events at all.

But suppose this message was true? Suppose the forgery of the passport *had* been detected? What might this lead to? It was admitted by Cherry that he and Stepan and their Gestapo friends had been gravely disquieted by this report. According to him they had realized that it was vital to their own safety to secure Obry's release lest he should reveal under third degree examination how he had come by the false passport. But—and this was the point—might they not have thought of other ways of protecting themselves? Might they not have taken measures *to silence Obry for ever* and thus remove even the possibility of his betraying them? How this should actually have been brought about I could only conjecture, for the forgers were in the Gestapo at Prague, whereas Obry had fallen into the hands of the Gestapo in Sudetenland, and the Prague forgers were not likely to

give themselves away to their own colleagues. On the other hand they might all be mixed up together, the "front door" and the "back door", and have a common interest in protecting themselves. Suppose the Prague Gestapo had arranged for the captive to be returned for cross-examination at Prague instead of Mies? Could he not easily have been killed on the way? And wouldn't it have been simple to stage an "accident" or "suicide"? Couldn't the murdered man's body have been placed on the rails after dark and next day be found "mutilated beyond recognition", the passport having been carefully left in his pocket to identify him only by his false name? Might not the whole matter then be regarded as settled from the forgers' point of view, all danger liquidated together with "Friedrich Schweigler"? And wouldn't this theory account for the corpse being found near the Protectorate frontier? As for the reference in the Press, couldn't this either have been inserted deliberately by the Gestapo to confirm the report of suicide, or else, if the "suicide" had been well staged, could it not simply have been picked up by a journalist as a local tit-bit?

This theory, which now began to obtrude upon my mind, required all reports of release, escape, or imprisonment to be baseless, and either Stepan and Cherry were party to the conspiracy or were themselves dupes of the Gestapo. After all, having safely got rid of "Friedrich Schweigler", the Gestapo might well see it to be to their advantage still to keep false hope alive in the breasts of Obry's friends.

Forceful though this theory appeared when it dawned upon me, I realized I must not embrace it with too great assurance before I had had an opportunity to examine others than Cherry at Prague. In particular it was neces-

THE SOLUTION

sary to clarify Haller's position. Furthermore, there still remained the contradictory fact of Bock's allowing the bargaining about Obry's ransom to reach an advanced stage. And another enigma was the appearance of the newspaper report only in a journal published two hundred kilometres away.

I was eager now to discuss these new possibilities with Franz, the lawyer who had given me the introduction to Dr. Bergmann. I had found him absent in Sweden when I had returned from London, and when his secretary telephoned to me that he was back I took the first train to Dresden to see him. I showed him the *Die Zeit* reference and told him of my meeting with Bergmann and all my conversations at Prague. Without stressing my latest suspicions I pointed out my reasons for regarding the newspaper report as a fabrication, and asked him if he could telephone to the authorities concerned in Sudetenland and make an inquiry about "Friedrich Schweigler" similar to that he had made three weeks earlier about "Alfred Obry". After considering how to clothe such an inquiry so as not to excite suspicion, he said he would give as pretext that he had heard rumours of the death of a man called Schweigler, and as he had a client of the same name he wanted to find out if it was the same man. This would leave him a loophole for withdrawal if his inquiry did arouse suspicion.

I returned to his office when all his staff had gone, to hear the result.

Though nobody was left on the premises he shut all the doors carefully. After much telephoning he had been finally put on to the criminal police at Carlsbad, the seat of the Government of the province of Sudetenland. "They have a story down pat," he said. "They say they have

a circumstantial report of the suicide of a man identified as 'Friedrich Schweigler', but they know nothing more about him. The official cause of his arrest was that his papers were not in order. He was kept at the Gestapo at Mies for a time—two or three days, I gathered—then he was sent to the local hotel—very likely because the Gestapo filled up with new prisoners—but he was not allowed to leave the town. He was ordered to appear at the Gestapo for further cross-examination next day at nine o'clock. He didn't turn up, and when inquiries were launched it was found he had walked out of the hotel early in the morning and his body was found on the railway line. That's the story."

"Do you believe it?"

Franz hesitated. He thought probably someone called Schweigler must have died, because the report was too circumstantial to be based on absolutely nothing. But the rather curt way they had said that *nothing* more was known about him gave reason to suspect that on that side of the matter something might have been suppressed. The whole thing depended upon whether they had found out that Schweigler was Obry. "If they have found that out," he concluded, "I should think the story has been 'doctored'."

I told him my suspicions that the Gestapo might have done him in to suppress the traces of their own corruption. He agreed with me entirely.

"And I strongly advise you to have nothing whatever to do with the affair any more," he said emphatically.

"Why not?"

"You will burn your fingers. Drop it."

"But I *must* make absolutely sure. My job is to *find* Obry."

THE SOLUTION

He smiled sceptically. "And how could you ever make absolutely sure of a thing like that?"

I hardly knew what to answer. "I could accuse them of having murdered him," I threw out at a venture.

"Are you mad?"

What could I say? I didn't want to argue—indeed I didn't know how I should argue the matter. I liked Franz and was grateful to him for what he had done to help me, and I didn't want to appear to go counter to his view. I left him, saying I must think it over, and took the late train back to Berlin.

Next morning I rang him up again. I wanted to have another talk with him. But his secretary told me he had had an unexpected call abroad and would be away for several days. It was really with some relief that I put down the receiver. It was better that he should not know in advance that I contemplated doing the very thing he had said I must on no account do, namely, go to Mies myself. I would be able to tell him afterwards. I little thought I should never see him again because Germany and Britain would be at war. Before war started I was in Dresden and Berlin again on several occasions, but always missed seeing him, as he travelled about a great deal. I have no idea where he is now, but I can only wish him safety from the bottom of my heart, for, as I have mentioned, I liked Franz very much indeed.

I should like to pause here to mention an incident which, though it had nothing to do with my search, yet influenced me in it.

The British Ambassador had had a small dinner-party at the Embassy at which only four persons were present: Sir Nevile Henderson himself, the Counsellor Sir George

Ogilvie-Forbes, Mr. F. L. Kerran, a member of the British Labour Party, who was on a European economic mission of inquiry, and myself. It was one of those free-and-easy evenings which Sir Nevile preferred, for a dislike of formality is one of his distinctive characteristics. After dinner we sat talking well beyond midnight, and Ogilvie-Forbes told me next day that it was long since he had seen the Ambassador, who was, of course, working at that time under very great strain, get so carried away by a discussion.

This had raged over a wide range of subjects, beginning with the existing situation and including incidentally the possibility of a German-Soviet agreement. I say discussion "ragged" because, while Kerran and I agreed entirely on the subject of Russia (he being, as he declared, a *true* British Communist and therefore quite out of harmony with the present mountebanks of the Kremlin), we disagreed on some other matters. I should like to say in passing that I entertain for F. L. Kerran feelings not only of friendship but also of admiration, for it is not everyone who, stepping for the first time off the train at the Moscow station when arriving for an official visit to the Soviet Government, would have the courage, as he did, to call attention on the spot to the bad state of repair of the platform, which was full of holes, and to tell the Communist authorities at the moment of greeting them that this was a shameful thing in a Communist State: more than that, being himself a carpenter, he insisted on showing them *how* to mend the platform, to the eternal credit of F. L. Kerran and their own shame for having neglected it!

Discussion on the evening in question turned upon constitutions in general. Kerran, who I am convinced is at heart one of the staunchest and truly British of con-

THE SOLUTION

stitutionalists, questioned in principle the value of the monarchist system, a view which was challenged by the Ambassador. Kerran suggested that Sir Nevile's was the only point of view an Ambassador could take. This also Sir Nevile disputed, and said it was his dream some day to retire from diplomatic service and enter parliament as a member of the Labour Party, but even so he would continue to be a monarchist.

My own modest contribution to the discussion was to take from my pocket the maxims of King George V, which he was said to have written and hung on the wall of his study at Windsor Castle (these had been given me some time earlier and I carried them in my pocket-book):

Teach me to be obedient to the rules of the game.

Teach me to distinguish between sentiment and sentimentality, admiring the one and despising the other.

Teach me neither to proffer nor to receive cheap praise.

If I am called upon to suffer, let me be like a well-bred beast that goes away to suffer in silence.

Teach me to win, if I may; if I may not win, then, above all, teach me to be a good loser.

Teach me neither to cry for the moon nor over spilt milk.

I suggested that these simple rules showed that kings could be at least as human as carpenters.

This led in turn to a new subject of discussion, namely, that of guiding principles and what sayings and maxims had helped each of us in life. Kipling, Henley, Tennyson and others were quoted. But the Ambassador drew from his pocket-book a well-worn sheet with a few lines written on it which he said he had carried about with him for many years. "I have generally found the simplest approach to a thing to be the best," he said. "These lines may not be high poetry, but they have helped me over

many a stiff stile." And he read out verses of which the following was the first stanza :

If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you'd like to win but you think you can't
It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you'll lose, you're lost,
For out in the world you find
Success begins with a fellow's will,
It's all in the state of mind.¹

Remembering the overwhelming responsibility that rested at that time upon his shoulders, I was deeply impressed by the dignified simplicity of these lines which inspired a great Ambassador in the most desperate fight to preserve the peace of the world with which any envoy can ever have been faced. In the last fateful days of August, 1939, when for twenty-four hours of the day he hung on the decision of the German Führer, unambiguously proclaiming our fixed resolution to fight aggression while he transmitted every concession compatible with national honour and human decency, I imagined him saying to himself: "Hang on yet, we may perhaps yet win: if you think you are beaten, you are—if you think you'll lose, you're lost. . . ."

Alas, no argument or consideration of right and justice could impress those so immovably bent upon ill as the Nazi leaders. Yet the proclamation of war was no defeat for the Ambassador, as I see it. For, by his patient but resolute handling of the situation, Sir Nevile Hender-

¹ I made up my mind to ask the Ambassador later for these lines, but in Berlin I didn't like to bother him about what might seem to him a trivial matter. But after war had broken out and I had begun to write this book I asked him if I might quote them and describe the occasion when he had read them. He agreed, took them from his pocket-book where he always carried them, and I copied them out.

THE SOLUTION

son succeeded in staving off for many days the inevitable hour and thus proving to the world and to posterity for all time beyond the faintest shadow of doubt the absolutely irrefutable justice of our cause. And that is a moral triumph which no man could have achieved who had not his understanding of Nazi Germany and the Nazi Government.

To return from contemplation of such events to my relatively insignificant affairs is certainly descending from the sublime. And yet my story, since I have got so far in writing it, would not be quite complete without mention of the incident I have described; for when a few days later I was faced with the alternative of throwing up the quest or pursuing it with desperate weapons it was recollection of the Ambassador's verses which served as inspiration to me to stick to my guns. They were not the sole incentive. The excitement of the chase, and the prospect of learning valuable things in the course of it, were the mainsprings. But when my friend Franz, and later others, sought to dissuade me by predictions of inevitable disaster, I thought of the Ambassador's lines and got on with the job.

I must now introduce two Nazi, or quasi-Nazi, friends whom I kept as it were up my sleeve for emergencies. They were neither of them influential, just ordinary citizens, but they had this in common that they both heartily detested the regime which they outwardly supported. But with that—and their business as commission agents though unconnected with each other—their resemblance ended, unless indeed I add that their Christian names, by which I shall refer to them, were respectively Bobby and Fred. These names were in keeping with a

fashion for aping things English and American that defied Nazi chauvinism. "Made in England" continued to the last to be the hall mark of quality, as "made in America" was of originality. More than once just before the war my baggage was examined at Tempelhof airport by customs officers who announced their satisfaction with an unexpected "*Das ist schön okay*"!

Bobby apparently exploited his party connexions purely and simply for the advantages they offered. He was a jovial, happy-go-lucky, dare-devil sort of fellow who took delight (which he made no effort to conceal from me) in assisting people persecuted by the Government, Jews no less than others. He helped these wretched people in a dozen ways to alleviate their persecution and circumvent the strict application of stupid and cruel laws. He did this slyly and cautiously, but persistently, desisting when he felt danger lurking, defeating suspicion at such moments by a redoubled show of Nazi fervour, but ever lying in wait for another opportunity surreptitiously to delude the powers that be and help a friend in distress. Bobby was the man I really wanted as my accomplice in the adventure on which I was about to embark. I had already sounded both him and Fred. Both had cars in which they said they were willing to drive me anywhere in Germany. That had been when I thought I might have to rescue Obry from prison or concentration camp and make a dash with him across some frontier—an escapade which would have delighted Bobby's heart as it would mine. But if Obry was no longer alive I needed them, or one of them, to help solve the secret of his death. My plan was for a frontal attack upon the Gestapo, but I wanted someone who would simultaneously do a bit of underground work—who would, as it were, stick his nose

in the back door and sniff around while I entered from the front.

Bobby would have loved it. But he did not answer when I telephoned. In reply to my "Bobby, is that you?" a truculent voice demanded, "Who wants him?" so that I hastily clamped down the receiver, rejoicing that I had rung up from a street box and not from the Adlon.

We had also a go-between, a Jewish lady whose family he had helped. This lady told me Bobby had not been seen for some days. He was certainly in trouble with the Gestapo. It was no use calling him up. The enemy was within his gates. He would wriggle out of the toils, of course—he always did—but meanwhile it was useless to look for him.

Gravely disappointed, I turned to Fred. Fred was a man of very different mould. He had none of Bobby's ingenuity or love of fun. He was a hypochondriac. Bobby was like a jack-in-the-box. Fred's gaiety was that of an undertaker's mute. He had joined the Nazi party from conviction many years before its advent to power, and had then gradually become disillusioned through the extreme inconveniences he found it brought upon him. Somewhat of a thinker, he had come to regard Nazi principles with contempt. But in his buttonhole he none the less displayed the *Ehrenzeichen*, a badge of honour worn by members of the party of long standing, which he continued to wear for the protection it gave him, whatever he felt about things in his heart.

Earlier in the year I had been the instrument of doing Fred a service which he was anxious to repay. He had had business in Paris which it was next to impossible for him to transact on account of the regulation restricting

the amount of money Germans might take over a frontier. I arranged for a sum to be placed at his disposal in Paris, and this had enabled him to remain there a week and complete a profitable transaction. For this he was very grateful, and I was sure I could rely upon his friendship. He would not be so agreeable a companion as Bobby, nor so apt in nosing about at Gestapo back doors. In fact, he would probably be afraid to do anything of that sort at all. But he would be useful to me in other ways, and most of all because he had an uncle who was a member of the Reichstag and occupied a prominent public office; in an extreme pass I might have called upon him to invoke his uncle's influence, but meanwhile it was enough that he was his uncle's nephew. To have a Reichstag member's nephew as one's travelling companion, wearing an *Ehrenzeichen* in his buttonhole to boot, would mean a lot to me in the peculiar circumstances in which I foresaw that I might find myself.

So I telephoned to Fred: "Come and have a drink at the Bristol."

He came, looking haggard and jaundiced as usual.

"Listen, Fred. You remember that case of a disappearance I told you about. Well, I believe now it is a murder—you know, by your friends of the Gestapo."

"I guessed it from the start," he reminded me.

It was quite true. To him, knowing his Nazis, the word "disappearance" was synonymous with "liquidation".

"So the search is off?" he asked.

"On the contrary, it is about to begin. My job is to find the missing man alive or dead."

"Only you are not thinking of going to—what's the name of the place where your man was arrested?" Like

THE SOLUTION

Franz he had said steer clear of the local Gestapos, they were completely savage.

"Mies? That is just where I *am* going. And I want you to go with me."

He moved uneasily. He thought it foolhardy to go anywhere near the Mies Gestapo. Like Franz, he believed I should be kidnapped or otherwise get done in myself. And it might go ill with anyone who was with me. However, finally he said he wouldn't let me down, he would go with me, but only on condition that I told no one who he was. This didn't suit me nearly so well. But I had nobody else I could call upon. If Fred insisted on remaining anonymous I must cut out proclaiming his exalted connexion. We agreed upon a pseudonym which he was to use as long as he was in my company, and no one ever knew who he really was. His funk annoyed me, but what could I do? There was, after all, always the *Ehrenzeichen* in his buttonhole. In self-protection he would not be likely to remove it. And in case of trouble there was always his Reichstag uncle to rescue him, so he would be all right. And I was sure that if I were in a tight corner he would do what he could for me too, for he was a decent fellow at heart. So I had to content myself with that. I told him I should probably call him up from Carlsbad in two or three days.

"I will come the moment you ask me," he promised.

My first move was to revisit the Sudetenland lawyer, Dr. Bergmann, to whom Franz had originally introduced me. Twice that day I had tried to telephone to him without success. There were rumours of disorders in the Protectorate which might have affected telephonic communication with Sudetenland. I decided not to delay but

to go to him without making an appointment, and wait till I could see him.

The success of Dr. Goebbels's latest efforts to guide the German nation into the path of truth was reflected in my reception at the hotel where I had stayed on the occasion of my first visit to Dr. Bergmann three weeks earlier. The reception clerk and hall porter, who remembered me and had regarded me then as an object perhaps of curiosity but not of antipathy, gave me now a chilly welcome. The fates willed that I should arrive just when the news broadcast was on, blaring harshly from a loudspeaker in the hall. Goebbels was preparing the ground for Hitler's "self-defensive" invasion of Poland. Britain was reported to be inciting the Poles to perpetrate inhuman barbarities against the peace-loving German minorities. As I crossed the hall I heard a blatant voice proclaiming that Mr. Chamberlain had formed a sort of cabal with the inevitable "Churchill, Duff Cooper and Eden" (Goebbels's "unholy trinity"), and that they were clearly determined, in keeping with the traditional British principle of making others than Britons fight Britain's battles, to provoke hostilities against the long-suffering Nazi Reich; if any proof of this dastardly policy were needed it was to be found in the effort to rope in even the Bolsheviks to make the encirclement of the Reich complete and thereby wreak the destruction of that enlightened Germanic culture which ever had been mankind's guiding star. I looked round at the dull faces of the few listeners sitting in the hall. Daily, and even several times daily, the German people were served up this educational nourishment from the kitchen of Dr. Goebbels's propaganda office, with the choice of it or nothing. By sheer repetition it sank deep into the tractable and docile mind of the German burgher.

THE SOLUTION

When I came down from my room the radio was silent again, the hotel guests had gone in to the evening meal. I went in to join them. The waiter at the door said "Heil Hitler!", another waiter who showed me to a table said "Heil Hitler!", he took my order with "Heil Hitler!", brought it with "Heil Hitler!", the menu had "Heil Hitler!" printed at its head, the bill had "Heil Hitler!" written at its foot, and throughout dinner the obsequious manager wandered from table to table "Heil Hitlering" each individual guest in turn. I knew not a soul in the town, so went off afterwards to a cinema, where I saw the Führer in a series of characteristic poses and heard a speech by Dr. Ley, followed by a film showing the exploits of the German legion which had just returned from fighting Bolshevism in Spain, where they had won the war for General Franco—or such at least was the impression conveyed. Thus edified I went to bed.

When I rang the bell in the morning the waiter appeared with "Heil Hitler!" I ordered coffee. "Yes, sir. Heil Hitler!" "With toast, please." "Yes, sir. Heil Hitler!" He returned with coffee and toast and "Heil Hitler!", deposited them with "Heil Hitler!", and withdrew again with "Heil Hitler!" I found I needed towels and rang for the maid. She entered with "Heil Hitler!" "More towels, please." "Yes, sir. Heil Hitler!" She brought them with "Heil Hitler!" and withdrew like the waiter with "Heil Hitler!" When I left my room I encountered in the corridor a maid sweeping who said "Heil Hitler!", the boots "Heil Hitler!", and an errand boy "Heil Hitler!", while the lift man "Heil Hitlered" when I stepped in and again when I stepped out. In the hall the manager, the porter, the reception clerk and all the assistants were chiming "Heil Hitler!" to everyone they

saw, getting the same in exchange, so that the walls seemed verily to echo with the noble greeting—the only truly “German” greeting, as one placard on the wall announced: “*Hier gilt nur der deutsche Gruss ‘Heil Hitler!’*” while another placard had this couplet:

*Trittst du als Deutscher hier herein,
So sollst dein Gruss “Heil Hitler!” sein.*

(If you come here as a German
Your greeting must be “Heil Hitler!”)

Though in the privacy of their homes none but the most perfervid Nazis would be likely to greet their wives, husbands, and children with “Heil Hitler!” instead of good morning, dear, and good night, darling, on all occasions in public, such as meeting in the street, entering and leaving shops, addressing a stranger or a policeman, “Heil Hitler!” was the obligatory formula. On the basis of a population of eighty million people with everyone over fifteen years of age pronouncing “Heil Hitler!” on a moderate average twenty times daily, this greeting must have been uttered something like a billion and a half times every day for the last seven years throughout the length and breadth of the land. As a courteous visitor desirous of making an agreeable impression I always duly responded to the greeting with the echo of it, and when in moments of aggravation I reduced it to a healthy English expletive—“*Hell Hitler!*”—the difference was not detected. Its warmth may even have been appreciated.¹

When I called at Dr. Bergmann’s office I found he was out but would be back after lunch. So I went off to sit in

¹ Not everywhere was there such demonstrative fervour in the utterance of the obligatory greeting as in certain outlying districts. At the Adlon in Berlin the staff, in defiance of law or in deference to feelings, usually said “*Guten Tag*” quite humanly. But in the “reclaimed” territories of Sudetenland there was a tendency for a time to be *plus royaliste que le roi*.

a garden café and rehearse once again the tactics I had decided to adopt.

I could think of no other way to induce the Gestapo to reveal the secret of Alfred Obry than by charging them with having murdered him. Merely to request information about "Friedrich Schweigler" would even at the best produce nothing more than the official account which had been summarized to Franz; and if I then suggested that "Friedrich Schweigler" was Alfred Obry they would say they knew nothing about that and didn't believe it, and that would be the end of the matter.

So I planned to exploit the impression I had made upon Bergmann at my first visit. Bergmann had then been convinced that there must be a diplomatic background to my investigation which for diplomatic reasons must not be openly spoken of. I intended now to say that new information had come to light; that it was now known that Obry had attempted flight disguised under the name of "Friedrich Schweigler", and that in London it was strongly suspected that the Gestapo knew this too and had caught him and done him in, and I counted upon this provoking in Bergmann fears of all sorts of complications. If I discovered that the Gestapo had really murdered the man should I be able to do anything about it? It was very doubtful. But Bergmann needn't know that. He would fear exposure of the malpractices of the Gestapo, with reflexion upon himself, since he had given advice in the affair and even been prepared to make a deal for himself out of it. So what I wanted to do was to provoke him and the Gestapo into enabling me to make such an investigation as would convince me personally of how Obry had really met his end—assuming always that the supposedly dead man was truly Alfred Obry.

But in making this charge my plan was not crudely and bluntly to voice a suspicion of murder as coming from myself. That would have been merely to court hostility and spoil my chances. It would be necessary to proceed more subtly. I would refer the suspicion to interested parties in London, not necessarily the relatives, but rather those exalted persons in the background who Bergmann, after Franz's prompting, believed must be the real instigators of my inquiry. As for me, I would remain the neutral and impartial investigator—partial, if at all, only to those who lent me assistance in the investigation. This I would also delicately insinuate, of course. Thus, by conjuring up in the imagination of the vain Dr. Bergmann, who had had dealings with Lord Runciman and our Foreign Office envoys a year earlier and who believed me to be secretly endowed with similar authority, the spectre of the highly unpleasant consequences which might follow a refusal to facilitate my inquiry—a refusal which would in itself lend weight to the worst suspicions—I counted upon placing him in a position where he would feel that he had no alternative but to help me.

He would, I foresaw, naturally warn all the authorities concerned to be prepared to meet the challenge. Weak spots in the Gestapo armour would surely be repaired before I was allowed upon the scene. Any trumped-up documents would, of course, be put shipshape before I should be allowed to see them. I should have to use my own wits in deciding what to believe and what not. It was to keep track of machinations of this sort that I had wanted to have Bobby with me, snooping, so to speak, round the "back door" while I was engaged at the front; or, failing Bobby, to have the imposing support of Reichstag-member So-and-so's nephew as my "delegated assist-

ant". Alas, I was deprived of both these props through Bobby's personal difficulties and Fred's personal cowardice; but the latter's companionship—plus *Ehrenzeichen*—would still mean much. I should be less open to molestation. I would regard him as a reserve force, to be called upon—plus uncle—in case of serious trouble. And as for the outcome, I should have to form my own conclusions unimpressed by whatever pitfalls, threats, or blandishments I might encounter. Whether I would express my final conclusions openly to the Nazi authorities was another matter. If along the path or at its end I were obliged for considerations of strategy to make a show of concurring with official views while inwardly demurring, I would refuse to make any statement or put my signature to any document without having first consulted "headquarters", and thus leave myself a loophole to reopen the case if need be.

This, then, was the design I had in mind. I have said I could think of no alternative. But it would be untrue to say I adopted it reluctantly. When it occurred to me I seized upon it with gleeful excitement. The game was after my own heart. I embarked upon it readily, and although, as the reader will learn if he is sufficiently interested to read further, I let myself in for some very uncomfortable moments, I felt nothing of that at the outset, and entered Dr. Bergmann's office at the appointed hour keen for the fray.

But before I launched my assault there was reconnoitring to be done. Over a fortnight had elapsed since I had last talked with Bock in Prague. Since then the *Die Zeit* report had come to light. What had transpired meanwhile on Bock's side? How much had he communicated to Bergmann? How much had the Gestapo told either of them

of the fate or whereabouts of the missing man? Was the encouragement Bock had given me based on something real, or was it part of a plot to commit me to paying an advance on a transaction that would never be fulfilled? By my counter-attack I hoped at least, before negotiations for ransom took a single step further, to force the Gestapo to reveal whether they really did have Obry still alive in their possession.

Bergmann received me with less cordiality than at my former visit.

"Things are getting pretty bad between our two countries," he began.

I assented and deplored the fact.

"Your politicians seem resolved to provoke us in every way they can—the guarantee to Poland, the overtures to Russia. . . ."

I gave my stock reply that I was not in agreement with my Government on all points of their policy, but did not believe they desired to quarrel with Germany.

He persisted that we seemed to do nothing else. Lord Runciman (he loved to talk about Lord Runciman) had agreed with Germany about Sudetenland the year before—that was fair. So why did our Government make such a fuss about the occupation of Czechoslovakia? It was no affair of Britain, he insisted. Hitler had been invited to occupy Prague by the Czech President, so the surrender had been voluntary.

"Unfortunately the British Government took a different view—but I should prefer not to take sides," I said in a conciliatory tone.

He took the hint and turned to the Obry case, asking me how I had got on with Bock and whether I had any further news. I parried by telling him the negotiations

with Bock had been satisfactory, as he probably knew, but owing to the Whitsun holidays they had been interrupted. "I wanted to ask *you* if *you* had any further news," I said.

"I have not seen Bock since you were last here," he replied cautiously.

(No? But you've certainly telephoned, I said to myself.)

We continued to spar. "The negotiations with Bock," I said, "went so well that I took it for granted that he knew where Obry was."

"I'll get through to him now," he said, and gave the order to his secretary. "Urgent," I heard him add.

He offered me a cigar and we moved over to two comfortable chairs. I felt in a quandary. The next step on my side must be to tell him of Friedrich Schweigler, but I didn't want to broach this before hearing the result of his call to Bock; on the other hand, to talk politics meant either to sit like a cowed dog and listen to his tirade or to challenge the German view and arouse acrimony.

But he saved the situation for me in an unexpected manner.

"That is a terrible submarine disaster you have had—the loss of the *Thetis*. We are truly sorry to hear of it."

He spoke with obvious sincerity. The sinking of the *Thetis* had happened a few days before and the German papers had a great deal about it. It was curious to read, side by side with the most sarcastic and derisive attacks on British policy, references to the disaster which bore every mark of genuine sympathy. I remarked upon this to Bergmann.

"But we don't wish you ill," he protested vehemently. "We want to be friends with you. The Führer has said so again and again. All this quarrelling is wrong. You

and we ought to stand together. But your politicians seem to have gone mad. They are deliberately seeking a quarrel. You don't want us to be strong, I suppose. You are afraid of us. . . ."

The call to Bock came through and interrupted the argument. He started to talk to him at his desk in my presence, but after a few moments of listening he said in a changed voice into the telephone, "Wait a moment." He put down the receiver and went into the next room, where I could dimly hear him continuing the conversation at another apparatus. I was sorely tempted to lift the receiver at his desk and listen in. But he might have noticed the receiver being lifted. Or his secretary might have come in.

He was out of the room a good quarter of an hour, and when he returned he was clearly disconcerted. "Bock says the Gestapo at Prague have not yet found him," he said.

"Then why did Bock lead me to think they had?" I demanded.

"He says Obry was thought to be under arrest, and if his disappearance was not noted earlier, it could only have been through the connivance of the Czech police."

Now that was a dirty trick on the part of the Gestapo, for I was to learn later that the Gestapo's own belief that Obry was in their hands, and the long time it took them to find he was not, were due to a totally different cause, namely, that prominent Czechs had been arrested and thrown into prison indiscriminately in such numbers that proper registration or record of the captives was quite impossible. People were seized upon the slightest suspicion, thrown into jail and left there without charge or

THE SOLUTION

examination, neglected and forgotten. I found eventually that the heads of the Prague Gestapo had been truly convinced that they had Obry in their hands, and it was a mystery to themselves that they could not find him, however long they sought in their herded dungeons. But all this I discovered later. I did not know it when I was talking to Bergmann, and when he spoke of the "connivance of the Czech police" it merely irritated me that the Gestapo, characteristically, blamed the Czechs for what I knew to be their own corruption. So that it was with a feeling of real gratification that I prepared—albeit tactfully in view of the delicacy of my situation—to lay the blame in the proper quarter.

"I may be able to throw some light on the matter," I said. "When I was in London at Whitsun I heard some new information. Will you read that?" and I passed him the copy of *Die Zeit* with the reference to Friedrich Schweigler marked with blue pencil.

He read it and said: "What has this to do with it?"

The name of Friedrich Schweigler really seemed to mean nothing to him, as indeed was to be expected if the Gestapo had murdered him to suppress all traces of their bribery.

I reminded him that I had told him at our first interview that the London relatives suspected that Obry might have attempted to flee in disguise. I now added the information given already at the outset by Madame Prosser from Paris—only I made out that Madame Prosser had just recently appeared with her story and this was why I had only heard it at Whitsun.

"It is an interesting affair," said Bergmann. "So now you think Obry has committed suicide as Friedrich Schweigler?"

That was what must be cleared up, I said. What proof was there that this report really referred to Obry? "It may be a coincidence of name. But even if it does refer to him, what proof is there that it was really suicide?"

"What do you mean?"

Other possibilities occurred to mind, I suggested. The report stated that the body was *found* dead. Suicide, therefore, could at the most be merely *presumed*. "I'm not speaking for myself," I went on. "I never knew Obry, never saw him in my life. I am acting for his friends and relatives, as I told you, and they do not believe he would ever have committed suicide."

"What do they suppose?"

"Assuming that this report does refer to him, they think he might have been done away with."

"By whom?"

"By the Gestapo."

He shot a look at me, ill-natured and full of cunning. I do not think it surprised him greatly to hear this suspicion mooted, but he may not have expected it at that moment. "It is an absurd idea," he said. "What would be the motive?"

"His friends—and I am only speaking for them, mind you—think one motive might be to facilitate the seizure of his property—his enterprises in Czechoslovakia which Germany so greatly needs."

"So they kill a man called Friedrich Schweigler?" he said sarcastically. "How would they know Schweigler was Obry?"

"That is just the most important point," I said, continuing the version of the story I had carefully prepared. "The supposition is that they did know, for we know

THE SOLUTION

from Madame Prosser that he had obtained false papers by bribing the Gestapo at Prague."

I had had a brain-wave when I decided to attribute my knowledge of details to the elusive Madame Prosser, for if they didn't believe in her existence they had only to refer to the Gestapo at Mies to find out that there had truly been a person of that name arrested about Easter. By inventing her recent arrival in London with a circumstantial story I was able to elaborate the picture freely without ever mentioning my informants in Prague. Thus the mysterious Madame Prosser turned out to be a most convenient shield behind which to hide Frau Ludmila, Haller and Cherry.

"Obry told Madame Prosser how he obtained his false documents," I repeated.

"It is absurd," Bergmann said again, with exaggerated emphasis. "Those Czechs are a crazy, hysterical lot. It is easy to get hysterical notions far away in London."

"Very likely," I agreed. "But they hold them, all the same, and if their suspicion is unfounded wouldn't the simplest thing be to help me to disprove it?" And I gave vent to another peroration to the effect that I personally, of course, would never have entertained such a suspicion, but the influential persons behind my inquiry must be satisfied in the matter.

In the silence that ensued it suddenly dawned upon me that if Obry was dead, then the question of any ransom money would become null and void. Heavens, why hadn't I thought of that? I made a move to make good the deficiency before Bergmann was influenced by it. "By the way, Herr Doktor," I said hastily, "I ought to have mentioned at the beginning that I should like you, if you will, in helping me, to regard *me* as your client,

whatever may have happened to Obry. You will kindly suggest what your honorarium will be. There will be no difficulty about it."

He protested, with a little embarrassed cough, as he had done when I raised the question at my first visit. I was, please, not to mention the matter of fees—yet. He was delighted to regard me as his client, but as for fees, "we shall, of course, come to an agreement—but let it be afterwards." And then he added: "After all, I don't know how much I am going to do for you."

Despite this ambiguous conclusion I threw in encouragingly: "Of course, I should prefer our accounts to be in English money, if you don't mind." (As if there was anything he would like better!)

"What would you wish me to do first?" he asked.

I told him of the information given to Franz that the protocol—the official report—of the case was at Carlsbad. Could arrangements be made for me to see it? "I'll make sure it is there," he said, and taking the copy of *Die Zeit* he disappeared into the next room. I could hear him telephoning, apparently to several places, but could catch nothing of the words. He was absent a long time.

(He's putting everyone on their guard, I said to myself.)

"Quite correct," he said when he returned. "The protocol of the case is at Carlsbad. The criminal police have it. I have spoken to the *Regierungspräsident* (President of the provincial Government) who is a friend of mine. Go and consult him. I will give you a letter of introduction."

Was he passing the buck?

"Did you—er—mention our suspicions?" I asked rather nervously.

THE SOLUTION

“No, no, explain it all yourself. That is all I can do for you.”

He *was* passing the buck! In confronting the Gestapo with an insinuation of foul play it had been part of my plan to do it gently through Dr. Bergmann. If it was true that he had not mentioned the suspicion, such an arrangement made it more difficult for me; for it was one thing to vent a suspicion of murder to Bergmann, with whom I was, as it were, on friendly terms, but it would be a totally different thing bearding the lion in his lair without any prior preparation. However, I had no cause for complaint about the letter of introduction to the *Regierungspräsident* which he dictated in my presence. It repeated all the warm recommendations which he had included in the letter he had given three weeks ago to the Gestapo to get my frontier permit. It began, like that, with “Dear Party Comrade” and ended “with my most cordial Heil Hitler!” It stated that I was interested in the case of Schweigler “because there was a suspicion of bogus identity”, and any assistance that could be given me would be appreciated, etc.

Nevertheless I parted from Bergmann without that note of warmheartedness that had marked our first interview. To tell the truth, I had the feeling that he was glad to get rid of me. I had become a very inconvenient client for a high Black Guard lawyer, and yet, in the circumstances it would have been difficult if not impossible for him to refuse me all help, for what impression would that have created? I was sure that in his heart Bergmann believed the insinuation of foul play had foundation—he was perhaps sure of it! Several little gestures, hesitations and expressions of face during the interview had betrayed him. Who indeed, not actually in the Gestapo, should

know its ways better than a Black Guard lawyer? But he had wriggled out of the situation by shooing me off on to someone else!

At the last moment I told him I needed another renewal of my Protectorate frontier permit, half fearing that he might refuse, or tell me to get this, too, somewhere else. But he said he would telephone at once; by the time I arrived at the Gestapo they would have the message.

I walked away pensively, wondering what I had let myself in for. Perhaps even now Bergmann was telephoning to Carlsbad to warn the *Regierungspräsident* to take precautions, saying he had given me a note of introduction merely for show, to gain time to plan some pitfall which should prevent my further investigation. Perhaps he would not even telephone to the Gestapo; perhaps when I got there I should find no order to renew my permit.

But this last fear at least was unfounded. The big, prison-like villa came into view. A man and a woman coming out stopped to look at the notice on the wall about frontier permits with its curious ending: *No exceptions. Useless to ask. Heil Hitler!* They seemed to be hesitating, then turned and walked away dejectedly. I rang the bell. The face appeared at the barred window. I stated my errand, reminding the man that I had been there before. The iron grille swung open and clanged back into place again behind me. I was not shown up to the Chief this time—perhaps he had heard enough about colonies from me not to want any more. Instead, I was shown into the hall where the mild-looking official with whom I had talked on my former visit sat writing something with two applicants standing beside him, cap in hand. When he saw me he interrupted his writing to get up and greet me. “Ach, Heil Hitler, Herr—Herr——” “Du-kess,” I

helped. "*Ja, gewiss*, Herr Du-kess, I am glad to see you again!" Here was cordiality, anyway. He showed me to a seat. Dr. Bergmann had just telephoned, he said. Might he have the expired permit? Thanks. The new one would be made out at once. For another two weeks? "Three, if possible," I said quickly. (Why not get what I could?) Three? He would see. Would I excuse him one moment while he dealt with the clients. The clients were disposed of and he turned to me again, ignoring the row of applicants that waited on a bench in the passage. "I am glad to see you. We never see English people now. I remember our conversation last time you were here. You have been to the Protectorate since? Is it not better now that the Czechs are under our protection? They ought to consider themselves fortunate. . . ." And I was treated to another dissertation on the virtues of Nazi rule and the sins of the Czechs. I listened indifferently, I am afraid, wondering whether my frontier permit would be brought down the stairs again by the good-looking young lady who brought it last time—good-looking girls, as I have already remarked, were such a rarity in Nazi Germany. Why? I pondered. There were plenty of good-looking Communist girls in Russia. My reverie—and the official's dissertation—were interrupted by the appearance of the young lady in person, whose smile was a warmer greeting than her perfunctory "*Heil Hitler!*" "*Was everything all right last time?*" she inquired kindly. "*Everything, thank you very much.*" "*Heil Hitler!*"—and she tripped away up the stairs. I glanced hastily at the green card. *Three* weeks. I shook hands with my official, who again wished me "*Gute Reise, Heil Hitler!*" and took my leave. "*Curious place, Nazi Germany,*" I said to myself as the iron gate clanged shut behind me.

"Fancy that girl in the Gestapo. . . ." Then: "I wonder if I can get a train to Carlsbad to-night." A tram passed marked *Hauptbahnhof*. I jumped on it, reached the station, found there was a train in half an hour, went quickly back to my hotel nearby for my things, and caught the train as it was about to leave. The late summer dusk was falling. It was quite dark when I reached Carlsbad. From the station heights above the steep bank of the river Eger the twinkling lights of the famous spa stretched away and vanished in the deep cleft where the town is packed higgledy-piggledy, unreal and fantastic, around the geyser that has thrown its restless jet of hot curative water high into the air since time immemorial. I drove to the big hotel at the bend of the river which is known by the (to our ears) unmusical name of Grand Hotel Pupp. Pupp food is none the less excellent for the name. I gave myself the best Pupp supper, and sank into a comfortable Pupp bed, in which I forgot everything, even Pupp. And at nine o'clock next morning I presented myself, letter in hand, in the entrance hall of Sudetenland Government House and asked to see the President.

VII

I HANDED in my letter and was shown upstairs into a vestibule at the end of a long corridor where several other people were waiting. It was a good thing I habitually took the day's newspapers about with me, for I was kept waiting an hour without anything happening. The other people also seemed to be waiting endlessly. Nobody spoke. I read. The others sat doing nothing. Finally, a secretary came up to one of them and said, "You will be received shortly." The lucky individual made an obsequious little bow and subsided once more into stagnation. After an hour and a half, when I had read all my newspapers and been reduced to studying the advertisements, I began to lose patience and set out in search of someone to shepherd me to the *Regierungspräsident*. After all, I regarded myself as an important applicant, and if the president was in council or otherwise engaged I wanted to be told so and not just be left endlessly in a corner like a wallflower. My quest was not fruitless. I stopped the first secretarial-looking person I saw—a young man with a bundle of letters in his hand—and asked to be shown to the room of the president's secretary. This young man very politely escorted me to another young man to whom I explained that I could not wait endlessly but wished to be received. The second young man said hesitantly, "*Ich werde sehen*," came out with me from his room, and knocked timidly at another door. He entered, and I followed as if invited. A young woman in spectacles sat at a typewriter. Lying at her side on the

table I saw Bergmann's letter to the president. It had something scrawled over the top. The young woman got up and said, "The president is in conference but has instructed Dr. Heindel to receive you; I am trying to find Dr. Heindel." Who Dr. Heindel was she didn't say. I thanked her, said I would wait a little longer, and returned to the vestibule. All the former collection of people were still there. I noticed also some new faces. The others seemed like old acquaintances. After another half-hour of silent immobility, espying one of the young men I had already spoken to, I again asked to be told when Dr. Heindel would receive me. Again I had myself shown into the secretary's room. Again Bergmann's letter lay in the same place. I was informed that Dr. Heindel could not be found. Would I leave a telephone number and the secretary would call me when he returned. I told her to ring me at the Grand Hotel Pupp and withdrew there for beer, for there is nothing so depressing as to sit looking at a dozen speechless, expressionless, shabbily dressed Germans waiting cringingly to be attended to by the powers that be and mortally afraid of saying a single word to each other beyond the silly exclamation "Heil Hitler" lest one of them or an attendant should be a secret agent of the Gestapo.

I preferred the Café Pupp. Eventually I lunched, and continued to wait, reading. But the collected speeches of the Führer that I had studiously undertaken to peruse provided intellectual nourishment only of a limited order. About three o'clock I tired of them to the degree that I had the head Pupp clerk ring up Government House and demand energetically when I might expect to see the elusive Dr. Heindel. The answer came, "At six o'clock." So I filled up the afternoon climbing the hill to the monu-

ment commemorating the visits to Carlsbad of Peter the Great, who in between building boats on the Zuider Zee and cities on the Neva would come to Carlsbad for his digestion. At six o'clock I went along to Government House once more to seek Dr. Heindel.

Dr. Heindel had been—and gone. So said the hall clerk, adding hastily, perhaps when he saw my expression, Would I see Dr. Heindel's assistant? I said I certainly would. "Third floor, turn to the left." I mounted as directed and eventually found a door with a card on it: "Regierungsrat Dr. Heindel." "So he is a councillor," I said to myself, knocking. No reply. I stopped someone in the corridor to inquire, and after much searching, Dr. Heindel's assistant was found. He was a young man with an agreeable manner. I said I had been told to see Dr. Heindel at six o'clock. He said he had heard nothing of it. "Please inquire of the president's secretary," I insisted, "she made the appointment." He telephoned down and found she had left. The president himself had not been in during the afternoon. "When *can* I see Dr. Heindel?" I demanded. The young man said Dr. Heindel's hours were irregular, he sometimes came in the morning and sometimes didn't. Would I ring up in the morning and find out. I said I would and departed. There did not seem to be much "German efficiency" in the running of *this* office.

I finally encountered Dr. Heindel next afternoon. He was a man of weak appearance with thick glasses and red rims to his eyes. I made up my mind to cultivate the assistant rather than the chief.

With a sickly smile, Dr. Heindel gave me to understand that he spoke English. I patiently strove to comprehend the guttural noises he produced and resolved

secretly to ask the assistant to translate them into German for me afterwards. Thus we stood for about fifteen minutes, while Dr. Heindel floundered helplessly among quite unrecognizable nouns, verbs and adjectives, his fidgety eyes seeking the English equivalents of "*heute*" and "*morgen*" on the ceiling and floor and in the room corners. I broke in at last upon this splintered soliloquy with (in English): "If you are busy now, Herr Councillor, shall I come again to-morrow?" His red eyes, looming large through thick windows, fixed themselves upon me blankly. In irritation and despair I returned to the charge, spelling the words out: "If—i-f—*wenn*; you—y-o-u—*Sie*; are—a-r-e—*sind*——" "*Ach, Sie geben mir ein English lesson,*" he burst in, laughing delightedly. I too burst into laughter, apparently to his great pleasure, for he laughed louder still, though he might not have been so pleased if he could have heard the epithets I was mentally squirting at him. The assistant, who had stood awkwardly by during this performance, also joined in the riotous chorus, clearly relieved at this happy ending to a state of growing tension. Profiting by the felicitous atmosphere I made good my escape, saying I would return next morning. I resolved to try and see the assistant alone.

I forgot that next day was a Sunday, but having announced an intention of going I went, and had the good fortune to find the assistant without his chief, clearing up some work. Dr. Heindel, the young man explained in greeting me, had instructed him to look into my application. He introduced himself formally. "Ernst Kanowsky—a Polish name," he said apologetically, "but German for many generations." He was rather bulky in build without being fat, and he had a good-natured, in-

THE SOLUTION

telligent face—I mean really intelligent, not just by comparison with Dr. Heindel which would have meant nothing.

Dr. Heindel, he said, in explanation of his chief's frequent absence from the office, was inspector of schools and his duties took him to rounds of the scholastic establishments of Sudetenland. I discreetly refrained from any comment. The state of education in Nazi Germany in 1939 may be judged from the fact that there was a crying lack of about five thousand elementary and middle school teachers due to the expulsion of all members of the teaching staff who did not subscribe to Nazi doctrines, and the consequent grave deterioration in the standard of instruction was rendered still worse by the unavoidable herding together of children into classes so large that in any case individual attention became a complete impossibility.

I was very glad to find myself in the hands of the assistant rather than of Dr. Heindel himself. I decided I would see how far I could get with him, and if things didn't go all right insist upon seeing the president personally.

Dr. Heindel had apparently said nothing to Kanowsky of the contents of Bergmann's letter to the president, so I had to explain. "The criminal police have a protocol—an official report—about a certain Friedrich Schweigler who is said to have committed suicide," I said. "I have reason to believe he was not who he made himself out to be. I am acting for friends and relatives and would like to see the protocol."

"Hm, I doubt if they will show it to you," said Herr Kanowsky pessimistically, "but let us see what we can do. There may be no one there to-day."

He rang up the criminal police. Contrary to his expectation the commissar concerned was at his post and an appointment was made for Monday morning. I thanked him and prepared to leave. But he stopped me. He peeped into the corridor, and cautiously shutting the door inquired if I had a minute to spare. He would very much like to ask me a question. His "question" turned out to be an interrogatory bombardment—of the type I was used to. What did British policy indicate? Why had Chamberlain "turned so violently anti-German"? Why was Lord Halifax a puppet in the hands (of course!) of Churchill, Duff Cooper and Eden? Why had Britain persistently turned down Hitler's offers of a peaceful settlement of European problems? Why did we invariably thwart Germany's legitimate aspirations? Why did we refuse to return the colonies that were crying out to be restored to Nazi ownership? Why did we seek to ally ourselves with Russia, the enemy of civilization? Was it not evident that the British Government were a tool of international Jewry? And so on and so forth. Kanowsky spoke with strange warmth, and in the course of his questions interposed the following arresting remark: "Our hate is becoming violent, but it is the hate which is akin to love, the measure of what we wish our love might be."

To all these questions I endeavoured to return answers that would not antagonize my interlocutor while yet throwing (I hoped) some light at least upon them, and I believe I usually succeeded in this delicate feat of tight-rope dialectic. Kanowsky at all events thanked me warmly. He would have been a keen student of world affairs had such a thing been possible in Nazi Germany. The very multiplicity of his questions showed how deeply

THE SOLUTION

he took things to heart. But his understanding was warped by the distorted values presented in the Nazi Press. He was also convinced that British Nazis and Fascists were really very numerous, and that Sir Oswald Mosley was an object of embittered persecution at the hands of the British Government because he had been married in Dr. Goebbels's house in Berlin in the presence of Hitler and Goering, whose intimate friend he was well known to be. I tried to explain to him that the British political arena without a clown was as inconceivable as an old-time Court without a jester. But it was difficult for Kanowsky, as indeed for any German, to grasp our point of view on such matters. Nevertheless, I got quite a long way with him. When he said, half to himself: "How is it, I wonder, that here in Germany we have so little information?" I resolved to take a big risk. I saw on his desk a copy of *Mein Kampf*. Looking up in it quickly, I pointed out the passages on pages 197-201 (of the original German edition), in which Hitler expounds the principles by which he propagates his ideas and guides the thoughts of his followers:

The purpose of propaganda is not the instruction of the individual. . . .

Its art lies entirely in presenting a case or the propriety of a necessary course in such a way as to carry conviction. . . .

Its appeal must be to the *feelings* of the public rather than to their so-called *reasoning* powers. . . .

Its intellectual level must be that of the lowest of those to whom it is directed. . . .

When it is a matter of putting a whole nation under its influence, then too much stress cannot be laid upon

the need of avoiding a high intellectual standard. . . .

All effective propaganda must be confined to very few points which must be expressed in the form of stereotyped slogans endlessly repeated. . . .

Propaganda must not examine the truth objectively if it is favourable to the other side, presenting it according to theoretical rules of justice, but must set out only that aspect which serves its own purpose. . . .

The very first condition of all propagandist activity is a systematically one-sided attitude towards every problem that has to be dealt with. . . .

The moment our own propaganda concedes even a glimmer of justice to the other side doubt will creep in as to our own right. . . .¹

I realized after one or two phrases that Kanowsky, like most Germans, had either never read *Mein Kampf* or had scanned it merely perfunctorily. It is commonly supposed, because many million copies of this book have

¹ The German original of the above passages is as follows:

Die Aufgabe der Propaganda liegt nicht in einer wissenschaftlichen Ausbildung des einzelnen. . . . Ihr Wirken muss immer mehr auf das Gefühl gerichtet sein und nur sehr bedingt auf den sogenannten Verstand. . . . Die Kunst liegt ausschliesslich darin, dies in so vorzüglicher Weise zu tun, dass eine allgemeine Ueberzeugung von der Wirklichkeit einer Tatsache, der Notwendigkeit eines Vorganges, der Richtigkeit von etwas Notwendigem usw. entsteht. . . . Jede Propaganda hat ihr geistiges Niveau einzustellen nach der Aufnahmefähigkeit des Beschränktesten unter denen, an die sie sich zu richten gedenkt. . . . Handelt es sich darum, ein ganzes Volk in ihren Wirkungsbereich zu ziehen, so kann die Vorsicht bei der Vermeidung zu hoher geistiger Voraussetzungen gar nicht gross genug sein. . . . Aus diesen Tatsachen heraus hat sich jede wirkungsvolle Propaganda auf nur sehr wenige Punkte zu beschränken und diese schlagwortartig zu verwerten. . . . Sie hat sich auf wenig zu beschränken und dieses ewig zu wiederholen. . . . Die allererste Voraussetzung jeder propagandistischen Tätigkeit ist die grundsätzlich subjectiv einseitige Stellungnahme derselben zu jeder von ihr bearbeiteten Frage. . . . Sowie durch die eigene Propaganda erst einmal nur der Schimmer eines Rechtes auch auf der anderen Seite zugegeben wird, ist der Grund zum Zweifel an dem eigenem Rechte schon gelegt. . . .

been sold or distributed, that it is widely read in Germany and even studied, but this is not necessarily so. The possession of *Mein Kampf* is certainly regarded as a civic duty, passages are read in schools, and up to the outbreak of war newly-wed couples always received a presentation copy at the wedding ceremony, but the very fact that it was wished upon the recipients willy-nilly detracted from its value and diminished its chances of ever getting read. Like the Bible which it was intended to displace, it must be there, on the bookshelf, on show, but opened only by the devout. It is not for what he has written but for what he has done, in redeeming German prestige and giving the German people a new faith, that Hitler is revered and idolized.

Certainly Kanowsky was reading the passages I indicated as if for the first time. I heard him grunting as I pointed to phrase after phrase. The touches that affected him most were those about the necessity of appealing only to the lowest intellects, and the disparaging reference to "so-called intelligence or reasoning powers (*sogenannter Verstand*)."

I saw the troubled expression in his face, and thinking I had perhaps gone too far assured him that I had no desire to cast doubts upon the Führer as a great leader, it was merely a question of whether Germans received unbiased information.

It was nearly midday and I felt I ought to go. More than once in the course of our talk my companion had got up and looked out into the corridor, evidently to see if anyone was eavesdropping. But on Sunday morning no one was about. He thanked me warmly. I had clearly made an impression upon him—deeper perhaps than I wished, I reflected as I walked away. He had asked

me to be at Government House again promptly at nine next morning, when he would accompany me to the Gestapo. But how could I be sure that he would not turn upon me as the result of what I had said? How could I be sure he would not say to the Commissar of the Gestapo: "Have a care, this Englishman is a wolf in sheep's clothing: his *Deutschfreundlichkeit*—his friendliness to Germany—is nothing but a cloak beneath which he hides a dagger!" Would he not acquire merit by giving me away?

So that it was with some apprehension that I kept the appointment next morning. But Kanowsky did not give me away, though his attitude toward me was indeed different. His behaviour was rigidly formal, and I realized that he would never have ventured upon such open conversation with an Englishman within the precincts of Government House on a weekday when colleagues and attendants were about.

We set out to walk across the town to the Gestapo building. In the dazzling summer sunshine the brilliant little spa was like a playground for God's grown-up children, who obstinately refused, however, to behave as in a playground. While the band in the park played gay enough airs hundreds of invalids ambulated gloomily hither and thither, sipping Carlsbad water out of little mugs with curved spouts.

In the summer of 1939 there were no English, no French, no Russians, and scarcely any Americans to amuse one at Carlsbad. The swaying crowd consisted of one face only—the stolid, lifeless face, devoid of all expression, of the stolid, constipated German burgher. For any emotional demonstration at all one had to turn to the ubiquitous picture-postcard stalls whose wares with coarse

humour depicted the "working" of the waters in a manner that left nothing to the imagination. "Before and After" was the usual title to the illustrations, while by lifting a flap or pulling a string one was realistically reminded of the event that transpired in between. Dr. Goebbels's attempted reform of German humour, while suppressing references to Scotsmen, made no assault upon this stronghold.

As we crossed the gardens I said to my companion: "You are fortunate to live in so delightful a place." To my surprise he demurred. He had only been stationed there two months and he hoped before the autumn to be removed. The place, that is, the town, had nothing to do with it, he added. There were other considerations. And as he was an intelligent and very sincere man I surmised that the figure of Dr. Heindel probably had a lot to do with it. For the good fellow had even with the best will in the world been unable to conceal his contempt for his superior.

We arrived at the villa on the west slope of the town where the Gestapo and criminal police were housed. I was shown into a waiting-room while Kanowsky went in to the Commissar. What was he saying to him? How much did Kanowsky himself really know? Judging by my reception at Government House, where the president had passed me on to Heindel, who had passed me on to Kanowsky, the latter could know nothing of the Obry matter at all, nor had he evinced the slightest curiosity, engrossed as he had been in making the most of the opportunity to discuss politics with an Englishman.

Kanowsky was a good ten minutes in returning. "Commissar Riegel is free now," he announced. We went into a small bare room with steel cupboards round the

walls. The windows looked out into pine woods which shut out a lot of light, so the room was gloomy.

"Commissar Rugel—Herr Du-késs," said Kanowsky.

I had confidently expected him to stay, but he made me a stiff bow, announced himself at my service if wanted again later, and with a formal "Heil Hitler" he withdrew.

Commissar Rugel signalled me to a chair opposite him. He was small, stocky in build, ruddy of countenance, gruff but not unamiable in manner, with little, twinkling, suspicious eyes. He was dressed in civilian clothes.

"You are interested in the Schweigler case?" he began. "Why?"

"Have you had no explanation of my visit?" I parried.

"No, none."

It was the only answer he was likely to give if Bergmann had put him on his guard.

"I have reason to believe Schweigler was someone else." I watched him for any sign of embarrassment. Only his eyebrows lifted slightly.

"Ach, so? Who, then?"

I said a man who was expected to arrive in England had disappeared. It was supposed that he was using a false passport, and it was thought Schweigler might be the same man. If I could see the description of him in the protocol of the case I might be able to tell.

He sat scratching his chin, smiling curiously. Was the missing man an Englishman? No? Who, then? A Czech? Then how did I come into the affair?

I did not want to dangle on the end of his string, answering all his questions, but there was nothing for it but to repeat the story I had told Bergmann, again ascrib-

THE SOLUTION

ing the evidence I had gathered in Prague to Madame Prosser.

"You think if I gave you the description of Friedrich Schweigler and what he was wearing you might be able to identify him with your man?"

"Perhaps." I spoke as confidently as I could, but to tell the truth I felt anything but confident; for I had as yet received from Frau Ludmila or Haller no detailed description of how Obry might be identified from clothing or belongings. Indeed, having no idea when I left Prague of the turn the investigation was going to take, I had not asked for such a description. But by thus replying I felt that Commissar Rugel must at least show me the protocol.

He went to one of the steel cupboards and brought out a file. I watched him spread in front of him a double foolscap sheet typed in purple ink.

"Is that the protocol? May I see it?"

"No," he replied curtly. "But I will read you the description of the deceased's clothing."

"I asked Dr. Bergmann to arrange for me to see the protocol myself," I said, very annoyed.

"Who is Dr. Bergmann?" he asked.

"Don't you know Dr. Bergmann? It was he who sent me to Government House."

"I have never heard of him," he replied almost superciliously, "but it wouldn't make any difference if I had." He passed his finger down the page. "Here we are. Body found totally unrecognizable. . . . Head torn off and crushed. . . . Right hand likewise. . . . The deceased wore a dark grey striped suit, a white shirt, white underclothing, a white, turn-down linen collar, a black tie with grey stripes, black shoes, black woollen socks, a grey over-

coat with the maker's mark 'Haussner late Hartmann, Berlin and Prague', black felt hat. Both the hat and collar bore the maker's mark 'Lassmann', and the hat size was 55."

He stopped and looked across the sheet at me. I think he must have noted the astonishment in my face.

"It is very detailed," I said.

"Of course," he answered dryly.

"May I make a note of that description?"

"Certainly," and he re-read it while I took it down.

"Had he any belongings?" I asked, remembering what Frau Ludmila had said about a suit-case.

He searched the protocol again. "Yes. A small trunk. Also a satchel. They are at Mies, at the town hall, in charge of the magistrate. But his papers—passport and frontier permit—have been returned to Prague. It seems they were not in order. Well? Does it sound like your man?"

"I don't know yet. I must send the description to the relatives."

"You had better see the belongings at Mies," he said, and after a moment's thought added emphatically: "Yes, you had better go to Mies. When can you go?"

"In a day or two, perhaps." I didn't wish to commit myself.

"I will inform the Gestapo there. They will expect you," he said, returning the protocol to its file.

"Where is the dead man buried?" I asked, suddenly thinking of this.

"At Mies," he replied without hesitation and without consulting the file.

He rose and I followed. "Go and examine the belong-

THE SOLUTION

ings at Mies," he repeated. "I will notify the Gestapo. Heil Hitler!"

I went out and walked up the hill into the pinewoods to think about this strange interview. It was very different from what I had anticipated. He had refused to let me see the protocol. He said he had never heard of Bergmann. But I didn't believe this, or that no mention had been made to him of my suspicion of foul play. However, the interview had not been fruitless, for the Commissar had read me out a remarkably detailed description of the reputed dead man's clothing, which must be either true or false. If Frau Ludmila were able to recognize it, it would seem to leave no doubt as to the identity of Schweigler with Obry.

But still I asked myself: Why had Rugel so readily given me this detailed description? The only explanation I could think of was that if the Gestapo had killed Obry and then staged a suicide, they would have no objection to my identifying the deceased *qua* suicide. All they would be interested in was the concealment of the crime itself. I was so struck by the detailed description, and realized so keenly that no further investigation could be of use until I had confirmed it, that I had omitted to ask the Commissar to read me out how the body was found. Perhaps he would have refused this. However, identification was obviously the first step. This meant going straight back to Prague. Should I stop off at Mies on the way? I did not feel easy in my mind about this pressing invitation to Mies. What could I be shown there? Only the travelling trunk and satchel. And if the whole story was concocted, then the trunk and satchel would, of course, be produced to match. I recalled the warnings of Franz, Bobby and Fred: "On

no account go to Mies yourself—you'll get done in!" Was this what lay behind Rugel's invitation? In itself Mies was an insignificant little provincial town—scarcely more than a village according to what I had heard—yet it was the headquarters of the Gestapo for the control of an important stretch of railway. Perhaps the key to the choice of such a spot was the ease with which, in a place buried among the hills, crimes could be staged with impunity and inconvenient individuals conveniently disposed of without trace!

Consumed with indecision, I wandered long in the pinewoods. It began to rain and I turned back. Anyway, I said to myself, if I *am* to go to Mies I won't go alone: if anything happens to me there I might as well have a witness. So I went into the post office and sent Fred a telegram to join me at once as agreed.

The reply came about midnight: "Ill. Cannot come this week." Annoyed with the turn things had taken, I thought: Damn it, why shouldn't I stop off at Mies, alone, just for an hour or two to look round? But there is a saying that man proposes, etc. I was just going to bed when a trunk call came through from London. "Weir speaking." (I always kept Mr. Weir informed of my whereabouts so that he could let me know in case Obry suddenly turned up abroad after all.) He said I must go immediately to Vienna, adding certain indications. Very important news—"of a very romantic nature"—had just come through. I gathered between the lines, so to speak, either that Obry was known to be at Vienna or that I should get definite news of him there. The communication received from Vienna by Obry's friend at Brunn flashed to mind. I rang to the porter to have me called in time for the early 'plane. At three I landed at Vienna,

THE SOLUTION

and at five I was at the address Weir had indicated.

The gentleman to whom I had been directed was a close friend of the missing man, and knew all his friends and relatives in Vienna. In his buttonhole was the Nazi badge, but I soon realized that this was a mere safeguard. I said I had come to hear the "romantic news" announced from London, and I told him also of the message received at Brunn to the effect that Obry was believed to be at Vienna three weeks ago. He stared at me blankly and could offer no explanation. I said Weir had received a letter from such-and-such a lady. "Oh," he said, "that is a relative of Obry. She came to me for comfort. I told her I saw no reason to think he was lost. He was a hefty fellow. I said it was as likely as not he had got out of the train and was tramping his way to Switzerland—maybe he had already got there but had not communicated on the way so as not to compromise anyone."

I told him she had written it all to London as fact.

He chuckled. "Did she? Silly old thing." But his face suddenly changed, paling. "Do you mean she put my name in a letter?"

"Probably," I retorted—though I didn't know this, for Weir had most discreetly camouflaged his telephonic indications.

He seized the telephone to ask the offending lady what exactly she had said.

"Tell her that by her romantic nonsense she has brought me a thousand kilometres out of my way," I said maliciously. "And I suggest that you tell her her letter was opened by the Nazi censor and all names and addresses copied out, Obry has certainly been caught, and she and you and all your friends will be arrested tomorrow. Perhaps that may stop further prattle."

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

It was annoying to have been misled by such stupidity, yet this side-flight to Vienna had served a useful purpose. Besides destroying a minor myth as to Obry's whereabouts, it had deflected me from accepting Rugel's "invitation" to Mies, and for this, as events proved, I had cause to be thankful, though not for the reason I thought at the time.

VIII

IN alighting from the aeroplane at Vienna I had dropped the envelope containing my ticket and it had been brought back to the ticket office with the card of the finder. Before leaving Vienna I wrote him a letter to thank him, but before sending it off asked the hotel manager to cast an eye over my conversational German to see if it needed stylistic improvement. He made suggestions, and then, looking round to make sure he was not overheard (we were at a table in a corner of the hall) he said in a feverish undertone: "You are English? May I say something to you? Will there be war? It is our only hope to free ourselves. The whole population is strangled and exploited by Prussian Nazis. Did you know Vienna in the old days? Then you see the difference. Dead! Nobody can say anything. I run a big risk talking to you. Some of my staff are certainly in the pay of the Gestapo. But it is such a relief just for one moment to speak freely, even in a whisper. Forgive me for bothering you, and thank you for listening. . . ."

He rose and in an audible voice said: "Your letter is very good, *mein Herr*"—and he took it to put it in the box. Signalling to a hall boy to take my things, he stood before me rubbing his hands and bowing with the fixed smile of the hotel manager, expressing the customary hope that I had been comfortable. And as I turned to leave I heard his final words: "*Auf Wiedersehen—gute Reise*"—then, very marked—"Heil Hitler!"

This little incident and its spontaneity impressed me deeply, and I thought about it as my train sped away along the banks of the river. On that hot afternoon the multitudes of bathers in the anything but blue Danube looked carefree enough. But it is dangerous to judge by the behaviour of the multitude.

My thoughts reverted to my quest for Obry. Should I ever complete it? I seemed to have made no headway. The Black Guard lawyer Dr. Bergmann had merely passed me on to the head of the provincial council at Carlsbad, who had refused to see me and left me to the tender mercies of Councillor Heindel, through whose assistant Kanowsky I had got to Commissar Rugel, who in turn invited me to apply to his opposite number at the remote village of Mies. Everybody seemed to want to push me off to somebody else, until most likely in some God-forsaken hole I should get bumped off into eternity.

Now I was on my way back to Prague to start afresh. I would ask Frau Ludmila whether Obry's clothing as she remembered it corresponded with Schweigler's as described at Carlsbad. I must also clarify Haller's rôle in the drama. He had suppressed so much of what had been revealed to me by Cherry that I naturally suspected him of playing a double game. And another reason for returning to Prague was that Rugel had told me that the passport of Friedrich Schweigler had been sent back to the Prague Gestapo. I must demand to see it. If my request were refused, that would be the moment to revive the insinuation of murder, which was my only means of bringing pressure to bear.

This side of my operations I called "pushing into the Gestapo by the front door". At the same time I intended

THE SOLUTION

to continue my inquiries by the "back door", that is, among those who had procured Obry's false documents. This was necessary in order to check up on the information received through the "front door". The situation would be piquant, to say the least—as long as the "front door" heard nothing of my "back door" connexions! If I could pull off this double intrusion wouldn't it be a spicy situation? While demanding facilities to investigate how Obry had disappeared, to be secretly in touch with the very people who had procured him his false papers right there in the Gestapo! When I followed this train of thought it led to possibilities so diverting that I had to go out into the corridor to have a good laugh—had I stayed in the compartment the gentleman sitting opposite me might have thought I was mad. Wouldn't the heads of the Gestapo, I conjectured, be just as keen to unearth black sheep in their midst as to lay their hands on a wealthy fugitive? So if I did discover where Obry was I foresaw that I might quite possibly find myself in the extraordinary position of being able to pose in the Gestapo's eyes not only as the finder of a man they had thought they safely had in their hands, but also as doing them a service by revealing to them the continued existence of passport-forgers inside the Gestapo: and if I played the cards cleverly I might even strengthen my demand for an investigation of Obry's disappearance by threatening (in the event of their refusal) to add to my insinuation of murder an exposure of the corruption within their gates; and it delighted my conspirative sense beyond measure to think that I should know all the time full well just who those passport-forgers were, even be in personal contact with them, and perhaps be able to warn them of danger!

We were approaching the Czech frontier. I prepared for the frontier formalities. Travelling by a day train I was unable to avoid examination as I did by tipping the conductor of a sleeping-car. But for first-class passengers the examination was cursory. Only the frontier permit was minutely scrutinized, stamped and details of it entered in a book.

I had so far not exchanged a word with the only other occupant of the compartment, a gentleman who looked like a travelling business man. But at the frontier he had caught sight of my British passport, and as soon as the train moved on promptly entered into conversation—first, of course, carefully closing the compartment door for privacy. I responded only half-heartedly, so engrossed had I become with my thoughts. Even when he insisted on showing me the book he was reading—*The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, by Houston Stewart Chamberlain—I was not much aroused. But I remember his expressing the view that Houston Stewart Chamberlain was the greatest Englishman who had ever lived, and this the greatest book ever written except *Mein Kampf*.¹ “I have been told,” he said, “that the Führer regards this book as his bible.” What an irony, he added, that the man who now led or rather misled British politics should bear the same name as the great philosopher who had recognized the destiny of the Germanic race!

Not seeing a party badge in my companion's button-hole, I asked him if he was a Nazi. He said he was not,

¹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain was born at Portsmouth in 1855. He was the son of a British admiral. Early in life he settled in Germany, became a great admirer of German institutions, growing more and more anti-British, and eventually adopted German nationality. His book *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* provoked much comment as being a panegyric of the Germanic idea written in German by an Englishman.

THE SOLUTION

there were too many things in the regime that he disliked, but that did not prevent him from regarding the Führer as the prophet of the German people. Not many people read *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, he said when I inquired, but they ought to. He strongly recommended me to read it. Perhaps he thought I looked a likely subject for conversion.

I listened to his dissertation with indifference, and as the train neared Prague went into the corridor again so as not to miss the picturesque view of the turreted city in crossing the river Vltava. Standing there I caught from another compartment a snatch of conversation much more entertaining than my companion's. "I am not a German," a voice was proclaiming loudly (but in excellent German), "and so I am impartial, and I tell you that the English are really the most unspeakably stupid and dull-witted race in the world; they are a nation of hopeless fools; they admit nothing, learn nothing, and can teach nothing; when an Englishman sticks his hands in his pockets and sits dumb as a log it is not the silence of wisdom as he wants people to believe, but because he really has nothing to say. . . ."

I edged nearer, eager, despite my liberal share of the alleged dull-witted stupidity, to learn more of this unsilent wisdom. But the train was approaching the Masaryk station. The passengers were gathering their things. I heard no more, alas, from the lips of the eloquent "foreigner".

I rang up Cherry. He was no longer afraid to come to the telephone for me. We met at the usual place and I arranged to meet him again that evening together with his friend Stepan, the accomplice of whom he had spoken

to me. I also insisted on seeing one of the men actually in the employ of the Gestapo who had had something to do with the forged papers.

Cherry protested that none of them would come, but finally said he might be able to make a courier come, the courier who had gone to Chodau to inquire into the mysterious telephone incident. "He knows all the others in the Gestapo who had anything to do with the affair," Cherry said.

"All right. Bring him."

"Will Haller know?" he asked anxiously.

"Not if you don't wish it."

"Please don't tell him." And I promised.

Then I tackled Haller about his part in the whole affair. I took him to lunch and made him repeat the history of Obry's flight from the outset. The little man winced and writhed when I held him up at the gaps in his story and filled them in myself. He was dumbfounded that I knew so much. Point by point I demanded of him why he had told me nothing of the unknown woman who had brought him Obry's message the day after his flight; of the telephone call from Chodau; of the sending of couriers through Cherry and Stepan; of the money paid by Frau Ludmila; of the unsigned telegram to Switzerland. And to each demand he replied with growing embarrassment that he had "forgotten", that the incident "had not seemed important", and other no less inane excuses.

"What did you do with the message the unknown woman brought you?"

"I threw it away." And he must have seen something particularly malignant in my look as he shrank back,

stammering: "I—I assure you, I saw no reason at all for keeping it."

But negligence or stupidity were not the real explanations of his behaviour. It was useless to reproach him for concealing or destroying evidence, or to speak of the sentimental value to Obry's family of that last tragic message and cry for help, or the valuable information the woman might have given had he questioned her. Rebuke was lost upon him. The cause of his conduct lay deeper. The man was simply panic-stricken, frightened half out of his wits, not by my merciless grilling, though that was bad enough, judging by his pallor, but because he lived in a constant state of terror lest his contact with the Obry case should come to the ears of the Gestapo. Hence his desperate anxiety to minimize his connexion with it, his frequent denial of any responsibility, his repeated assertion that he had sought to dissuade Obry from the venture. "And you must remember also, Herr Dukes, that I have responsibilities to my own family and to other people. Have I the right to jeopardize them by my chance association with Herr Obry's escapade? You know the terror under which we are living. I *must* think first of my own position, for their sake."

Next day I met Frau Ludmila's nephew in the street. I took him into a café and asked him what he knew of Haller. He said he had had good official connexions under the former Government, but the ground had been knocked from under his feet by the German occupation. Since then he didn't know where he stood, for he was pure Czech and had no German connexions at all.

Having dealt severely with Haller in elucidating his rôle in the affair, I did all I could from that moment onward to appease his fears, assure him that through me at

least he would come to no harm, and to co-operate to help him in the settlement of Obry's interests with the bank. As he wished to come to England to see the relatives, I gave him a personal letter to our passport authorities to facilitate his obtaining a *visa*; but when he did eventually come, during July, he did not communicate with me, although he knew I was in London at the same time. This was not to be attributed to discourtesy, but simply to his haunting fear of observation by the Gestapo even in London, for the Gestapo had its agents in England too. He foresaw the possibility of being made to account for every single move upon his return to Prague. And if the reader finds the picture I have been obliged to draw of Herr Haller unattractive, let him ask himself whether he, too, in similar circumstances, might not say, "I must think of myself first." I have seen a good deal of life under political terror, first under Bolshevik and latterly under Nazi rule; and I say that no man must be lightly condemned for frailty of character in the conditions of ever-looming persecution and danger in which the unhappy victims of those regimes are forced to dwell, for nerves of steel are needed to withstand them. Herr Haller was perhaps not a strong character, but he was certainly not a bad one; in ordinary life he was indisputably a good, capable and honest man; to the best of his ability he continued amid risks and hardships to protect the material interests of an associate who had spurned his counsel in circumstances which many another man would have considered sufficient justification for severing all connexion outright. Herr Haller did not do that. Quaking in his shoes, he still stuck to his guns—even another's guns. And for that, at least, I respected him.

.

THE SOLUTION

Praguers, like Berliners and the Viennese, love to sit about in cafés to read the newspapers. The principal cafés are all in or near Wenceslas Place. You are pretty sure sooner or later to meet there everyone you know.

Late that afternoon I sat in the largest and most popular of these cafés. The weather was warm and the big front windows of the establishment had been drawn up. Crowds strolled up and down outside.

After some minutes I noticed a young woman sitting alone at the next table, looking at me rather curiously. She looked away when our eyes met, and I returned to my paper. A moment later she was staring at me again. Again she turned away when I looked up, but this time I had a vague recollection of having seen her before somewhere. She was plainly but neatly dressed, and scarcely made up at all. She could hardly have been called good-looking, and yet there was an air of intelligence and simplicity about her that was decidedly attractive. When our eyes met again I felt it would be ridiculous not to speak to her. So I made the obvious opening: "Excuse me, *gnädige Fräulein*, but have we not met somewhere?" She replied, speaking German with a strong Slav accent: "Wasn't it you peering through the windows one night at the Passage Café?" And then I remembered. The reader, too, may perhaps remember that three weeks earlier, when I had made my first appointment to meet Cherry, I peered through the windows of the café to see if he was there, and was discovered in this attitude by a young woman coming out, whereupon I quickly pushed my way in, but evidently not without her having seen me clearly.

"You were looking for someone, weren't you?"

I admitted it.

"I know," she said.

I tried to indicate by an expressionless face that her having spied upon me, as she must have done, was of no interest to me whatever. I said lightly: "Are you always so inquisitive?"

"Not always," she retorted, "but you provoked it, peering like that."

Seeing that she had nothing but an empty coffee cup in front of her, I was about to invite her to have something more when she caught sight of a person outside, placed a coin on the table, said, "I must go! *Adieu!*" and made her way to the entrance. I looked to see whom she was joining. She pushed her way through the crowd to a big, rather burly man with fair hair and a good-natured face who was standing on the edge of the sidewalk. She spoke to him and he turned and glanced at me. They moved away and were swallowed up in the crowd. But a minute later I caught sight of him again a few paces farther on, looking at me over the heads of the passers-by. Then they both disappeared.

Without attributing particular significance to this encounter I began to wonder, merely as a matter of speculation, what she would be able to say to her friend about me—for she had evidently said enough to make him look at me twice. "That fellow at the next table," I imagined her saying, "I recognized him because I once saw him peering through the windows of a café looking for somebody, and I watched out of curiosity to see who it was, but it turned out to be no one interesting, only an insignificant little man with a face like a mouse. The fellow recognized me, too, and spoke to me, so I made fun of him."

But there were features of this incident that made me

THE SOLUTION

think more about it. First, Cherry on the evening in question had been seated at a table in a secluded corner where he could hardly have been visible from the door at which the young woman had gone out. Indeed, definitely he had not been visible, for I only found him when I looked about for him inside. How, then, did the young woman "know", as she said, that I had had a rendezvous?

The second point was that the fair-haired man she had just joined had found me sufficiently interesting to stop and look at me twice. Now, in her recital as I had imagined it, was there enough of interest to prompt him to give me more than a passing glance? Even if she had added that I was obviously a foreigner, was that of such extraordinary interest? Yet he had stopped a second time, stood on tiptoe, and taken another good look at me. She must have said more than I imagined.

It did not take long for the idea to occur to me that I was perhaps being watched. I began to rehearse in my mind my movements since I arrived from Vienna. The brief meeting I had had with Cherry that morning was the one that caused me most misgivings, and I was to meet him again that evening with Stepan and the courier.

When I repaired to the rendezvous at the appointed time I approached it very circumspectly, fully on the watch for being tracked.

I found Cherry, but he was alone. He explained that Stepan, who was still being pursued by the German authorities, had been afraid to come to so public a place even as this secluded café, but we would go to another retreat where we should meet him and their Gestapo associate. Now very much on my guard, I hesitated. If Stepan was in hiding, then the place to which we

would be going must be some very conspirative haunt. I was well dressed; my light summer suit and grey hat were conspicuous; they were not the sort of get-up that would be suitable for obscure dens or underground gatherings, and I felt nervous on account of the incident with the young woman. For a moment I thought to tell Cherry of this incident and of my fears that I was perhaps being watched. But it would only have made him nervous as well. And I was too keen on the coming meeting to back out of it merely on account of a fear that might be groundless. So I said I was ready and we set out at once.

I have already spoken of the covered alleys and tunnels with which the houses of Prague, especially in the old central part, are honeycombed. It is an ideal place for revolts or demonstrations, and the Nazi "Protectors" will have a hard job suppressing outbreaks. You dive into almost any archway and you find yourself in a maze of passages like the inside of an ant-hill. Cherry led me into such an archway, but caught me looking back over my shoulder.

"Are you looking for somebody?"

"Isn't it just as well to make sure no one is tracking us?" I suggested.

"It would be hard to track us here," he replied, evidently speaking with experience, and I followed him more confidently along the deeper passages.

We came at last to a little bar, ill-lit and smoky. Cherry pushed his way inside, and we passed through it into a small courtyard containing a few iron tables and chairs and shrubs in green wooden pots. Looking up, I could see the clear evening sky between the walls and chimneys of gabled houses. Coloured electric lights

THE SOLUTION

strung across the yard gave it an air of cheap gaiety. The scene had a low Montmartre touch. In one corner was a wooden bench filling the right-angle space. Seated here were three people, the only occupants of the place. Two of them I recognized at once. One was the young woman who had caused me so much apprehension that afternoon and the other was the fair-haired burly young man whom she had joined in the street. I was naturally surprised to encounter them again thus.

"Stepan—Herr Du-kess," said Cherry.

The fair-haired man rose and shook hands awkwardly. His hands were large and fleshy. His face had a boyish expression. His eyes were unsteady. His whole manner was nervous. To the young woman I was not introduced, but she smiled in recognition. The third person, at the end of the bench, was an unprepossessing young man of about twenty-two or three, sullen and even hostile in manner, with a thin face, prominent cheek-bones, a small, hard mouth, and a strand of dark hair falling obliquely across his forehead, Hitler-like. He sat round-shouldered and with his back half turned on his companions, as if reluctant to be where he was. Though there was no formal introduction, it seemed to be tacitly assumed that he and the young woman were of the company. Cherry motioned me to sit in the corner at right-angles with Stepan, while he seated himself on my left. By comparison with his burly friend he seemed smaller than ever.

They were all drinking Pilsener and I ordered the same. Stepan, leaning forward deferentially to me, opened the conversation.

"I am still being hunted, so I daren't go inside a café." He spoke German well, being probably a Sudetenlander

and bilingual. "The Gestapo are after me, but this man here"—making a gesture in the direction of the ill-favoured man at the end of the bench—"keeps them off my track. . . . When he is in uniform," he added parenthetically, "he wears black with the—you know what—on his sleeve." And he made a sign to show he meant the swastika.

"Is he the Gestapo man?" I asked Cherry in an undertone. He nodded. "The courier," he whispered.

"That Obry case gave us more trouble than ever it was worth," Stepan continued. "If he had given us away we should all have been put up against the wall."

"What I want to know," I said, coming to the point at once, "is whether you think there is the slightest chance of his being still alive somewhere."

Stepan shrugged his shoulders. "He was reported released. This man showed me the list of the discharged that day. And this man went to Chodau about the telephone call."

"So it was you who first heard of the *Die Zeit* report?" I asked, speaking in the Gestapo man's direction. I wanted him to answer.

For a moment he said nothing. But my question was so obviously directed to him that he turned abruptly and said in an irritated voice: "They have already told you all we know, haven't they?"—and breaking into Czech he added something in a tone of remonstrance to Stepan, perhaps for having been dragged into this encounter. He also was probably a Sudetenlander.

"Was there any truth in that newspaper report? Did you believe it?" I persisted.

At this he turned angrily upon Stepan and burst apparently into a vehement protest, but I could only

guess at what he said. The young woman, who was sitting on his left between him and Stepan, put up her arm to motion him away, striving to appease him. It seemed as if Stepan, Cherry and the young woman, whoever she was, were anxious to give me what satisfaction they could, but the Gestapo courier had obviously come against his will. When he had ceased protesting and resumed his sullen attitude Stepan said: "He considers that all he and his friends were called upon to do was get the passport and frontier permit, but what has happened to Obry since is not their business."

I deemed it wiser to say nothing aloud, but I whispered to Cherry: "How so? Didn't he get part of the extra money Frau Ludmila gave?" Cherry whispered back, "*Ja, natürlich,*" and looked very uncomfortable. He was evidently afraid of the courier. I saw the situation was too delicate to make any protest. As an interview the meeting had been futile. But still I had learnt something. The fact that Stepan had not avoided me but had been willing to see me even in one of his hiding dens spoke in his favour. He had nothing to add to what Cherry had told me, but it was brought forcefully home to me that the only "back door" information from the Gestapo regarding events beyond the Czech frontier had been supplied by individuals of the shadiest type if this courier was to be taken as a specimen, and that very little credence should be attached to it. I saw pretty clearly how things were, for I had had experience of such types in the Cheka-Ogpu. There were always ill-paid underlings and petty officials who could be bought and were very useful for odd jobs. The courier and his Gestapo accomplices were doubtless of this type. First, they had successfully obtained frontier permits for Obry's friends,

thus expediting their departure. This had been comparatively easy, involving perhaps a small bribe to some minor official who would declare the applicants to be friends of his. But the procuring of Obry's false passport, with a frontier permit to match, was a much more risky undertaking. It had meant stealing a passport and then substituting Obry's photograph. Men who practised such dangerous forgery would not hesitate in self-defence to do away with anyone they feared.

The possible sequence of events flashed to my mind. They hear (I pictured to myself) of Obry's arrest and are seized with alarm. If he gives Stepan and Cherry away they are all done for. So a courier is sent across the frontier. He finds a means to decoy Obry. Or perhaps he finds that Obry is being sent back to Prague for cross-examination, conspires with the guards to push him out of the train, and together they stage the "suicide". And the subsequent telephone call from Chodau and notices of release are staged as a blind not only for the relatives but also for Stepan and Cherry. These tangled possibilities flew through my mind as I sat and watched the courier arguing with Stepan. It was indeed very possibly a case of murder—but the murder might have been committed by the Gestapo "back door", by the conspirators who feared for their own safety, even more likely than by the Gestapo "front door". I was perhaps at that moment sitting at table with Obry's murderer!

But I should never find that out *here*. Perhaps at Mies I should find a clue. It was useless to talk to the courier. I sat on for a while so as not to leave too abruptly, then said I must go. "We really did everything we could for Obry," Stepan said as I left, and I was ready to give him the benefit of the doubts that had been in my

mind. Cherry led me out through the bar into the narrow passage by which we had arrived.

"Who is the Fräulein?" I asked him as we threaded our way along the alleys.

"Stepan's sister. She acts sometimes as a go-between." And after a pause he added, "She is my fiancée."

"I congratulate you," I said warmly. "She is very attractive, and very intelligent."

He was delighted.

"But I don't like your friend the courier," I said as we parted in Wenceslas Place.

"Nor do I," he replied.

My most touching interview was with Frau Ludmila. I do not wish to say much about this. But it is necessary to record that I read out to her the detailed description of the clothing of Friedrich Schweigler as given to me by the Commissar at Carlsbad. Alas, the description tallied all too precisely. The last doubts were dispelled when I quoted even the traders' names on hat and overcoat. Between her sobs she told me how she herself had accompanied Obry to those shops and helped him to procure his disguise. And she described how he had spent the last day, Easter Sunday, in a friend's house, fearful lest there should be a hitch in the preparations, or a sudden visit of Gestapo agents who might have tracked him, or a breakdown due to some oversight in the many details to be thought of. But Easter Monday dawned bright and clear and there had been no hue and cry. Friedrich Schweigler set out full of confidence, full of the spirit of adventure, sure that he would elude his persecutors.

I did not wish to bolster up Frau Ludmila with dim hopes, but in my heart I still was not fully convinced

that it was Obry who was dead. It was not yet proven that *this* Friedrich Schweigler and the Mies Friedrich Schweigler were the same person. It was still possible, for instance, that in captivity Obry might have exchanged clothing with another man. It was even possible that the Gestapo might have taken Obry's clothes and put them on another man. There was also the possibility that the Gestapo might have perpetrated some trickery with the Schweigler passport after the "liquidation" of Friedrich Schweigler himself. I might find the Schweigler passport, if I were shown it, to be that of another Schweigler. After all, with the Gestapo one had always to be prepared for anything.

I asked Frau Ludmila if she had any copies of the photographs Alfred had had taken for the Schweigler passport. For her own sake I hoped she hadn't, for it would have been better for her not to keep them. But she was no conspirator. She had kept the photographs he had left—several copies of two poses of a bold, handsome man, looking far younger than his sixty-odd years. Though only passport photographs, they revealed the man better than the little photograph the relatives in London had given me. Judging by these pictures, I should have said that the subject was of a frank and generous disposition. He did not have the air of a plotter or conspirator. And according to all the accounts I subsequently received he was indeed straightforward, open-hearted and daring.

I slipped a copy of each pose into an envelope and put them in my pocket.

Frau Ludmila said as I left: "He had those photographs taken on Good Friday. We thought it ought to be a good omen."

But they had brought him not good but ill luck. And

THE SOLUTION

they nearly brought me ill luck, too, though through my own fault. For next day, with those photographs in my pocket, I set out to push my way in, so to speak, at the "front door" of the Prague Gestapo.

IX

BANKER BOCK, who had bargained so readily over the ransom price for Obry on my last visit to Prague, thereby giving me to understand that he knew where Obry was and could get him released, greeted me warmly, but showed in his manner an embarrassment not unnatural in the circumstances. He himself had been fooled by the Gestapo, who had made him believe Obry was in their hands. I told him frankly I knew perfectly well that the cause of the mistake was that the prisons were so crammed that the Gestapo themselves didn't know whom they had got and whom they hadn't. Should I not be doing both the bank and the Gestapo a service, I asked him, if I found Obry for them, alive or even dead?

"Bergmann says you have found out he is supposed to have committed suicide," he replied, "only you accuse the Gestapo of having killed him. The Gestapo won't be too pleased about that! "

I replied as usual that it was not I who made the accusations. The Gestapo (I summed the situation up) thought they had Obry under lock and key, but now find he has given them the slip. Meanwhile a tailor called Schweigler is reported dead and presumed to have committed suicide. Obry's relatives hear from a third party that he had attempted escape under the name of Schweigler, saying he was a tailor. Two and two would seem to make Schweigler Obry, but those who knew Obry refuse to believe he would ever commit suicide, and suspect there

may have been foul play. "But how can I know for sure that Schweigler was Obry unless I see the passport with his photograph on it?" I asked him. "And how can I judge about suicide or foul play unless I examine the circumstances at Mies where he was arrested?"

His first comment was, "What a story it makes!" (And with my meeting with Stepan, Cherry and the young woman in mind, almost within a stone's throw of Bock's bank, I thought to myself: "If you knew about *that* you'd think the story more remarkable still!")

"Why should you hold any further suspicions?" he went on. "Bergmann tells me you have seen the police reports of the case at Carlsbad."

So Bergmann had been careful to find out what I had done at Carlsbad. I parried Bock's question by saying that firstly only a bit of the protocol had been read out to me, and secondly the people in London didn't accept that official report anyway. This last I expressed less bluntly of course, indeed in a long rigmarole, adding again that it was not *my* point of view that I was expressing, but I must satisfy the important people who were behind the inquiry. Bock was very curious to know who these people were, but I replied that I had no right to mention names.

The upshot was that Bock admitted to me that my talk with Bergmann had caused a sensation. He had already been in touch with the Gestapo about it, and they were anxious to prove the suspicion groundless. When could I go to the Gestapo? Any time? He told his secretary to ring up Herr Kriminalkommissar Braun. "He is the head of the criminal section of the Gestapo," he explained. (Is there any other section? I thought to myself cynically.)

"Commissar Braun? Heil Hitler! Bock speaking.

The Englishman I told you about is here. When can he come to see you? Four o'clock. Heil Hitler!"

"By the way," I asked, "how long has Commissar Braun been in his present post?"

"Ever since the occupation. Why?"

"It means he knows the Obry case from the start."

But my real reason for wishing to know if Braun had been in his job since the occupation was that it meant that it was he who must have been responsible for the purge of the Gestapo at the end of March. It would be he who had seen to the reputed execution of several Gestapo officials. And it was he above all others whose vigilance Cherry and Stepan and their accomplices had to elude.

The building requisitioned by the Gestapo for its headquarters in Prague was a huge gloomy structure in the street called Bredovska. It had formerly been the Petschek Bank. It was staffed by men in Black Guard uniform—black tunics and breeches, high boots, black peak caps, a large swastika badge on one arm, and revolvers in their belts. It was not always clear wherein the functions of the Gestapo differed from those of the Black Guard organization. In the end, of course, they were identical in supporting the regime by force, but the Gestapo had an enormous number of agents who moved about among the populace in plain clothes.

I approached the building in a hopeful frame of mind, for it was clear to me from my talk with Bock that my "inoculation" of Dr. Bergmann had been more successful than I realized at the time. But there were two things that somewhat disquieted me. Firstly, good relations with Bergmann and Bock might avail nothing if the Gestapo

THE SOLUTION

made up their mind that my investigation must be frustrated, and decided after all to "liquidate" an inconvenient prying Britisher, whose disappearance might easily be blotched over in the atmosphere of increasing international tension and impending war. And secondly, I had no clear idea what I should reply if I were questioned (as it seemed likely I should be) as to what else I had been doing in Prague, and whether I knew any friends of Obry in the city.

However, so far things had gone all right. It was a good thing I did arrive at the Gestapo in a hopeful mood, for it needed all reserves of cheerfulness to withstand the chilling atmosphere of that sinister establishment. Its high hall and corridors seemed dark even on a summer afternoon. Perhaps it was the sombre figures of the Black Guards that made them appear so. These, whose task was to act as wardens and guides, stood about on the steps and in the vestibule looking like jailers.

In crossing the hall it was impossible not to think of the cellars underneath, where perhaps at that very moment human beings were being flogged to death for no other reason than that they were Czechs, Jews or Communists. The top floor was also used for prolonged forms of torture, because cries and shrieks behind shuttered windows were not likely to be audible at that height from the street. Of course, a few weeks later, after Ribbentrop had dragged Hitler into the pact with Moscow, the Communists at least had a much better time. At Stalin's insistence many were let out and their wounds, inflicted by Nazi knouts and cudgels, were treated in Nazi hospitals at Nazi expense. I wonder if a time will come when, while German workers and their families get starvation rations, a man will only have to say "I am

a Communist" to be passed up the food queue by the Gestapo guard and be served first with the best pickings?

A Black Guard at the entrance conducted me across the hall to a table where a man sat issuing passes to different parts of the establishment. This individual gave me what schoolboys describe as an "oily" look and demanded to know what I wanted.

I said Commissar Braun was expecting to see me.

"He is expecting you?" repeated the man as if he hated me for this; perhaps it deprived him of the satisfaction of putting me through the third degree regarding my pedigree, standing and pursuits himself.

"He is expecting me at four o'clock," I repeated.

He looked at the clock which indicated about a minute to four. "You are early," he said.

I waited for the sixty seconds to falsify this statement. He was determined to make the most of them.

"Your business?"

"Would you mind asking that of Commissar Braun?" I said, looking hard at the clock which triumphantly struck four. I was prepared to add, "I dislike being late for appointments, but Commissar Braun will no doubt understand." However, this pleasure was denied me, for I felt a touch on my arm. A youthful Black Guard had received my pass from the man at the table and was signing to me to follow him.

The moment we moved along the corridor another Black Guard, equally youthful, placed himself on my other side. All visitors seemed to be thus escorted. The place swarmed with these young, black-uniformed guards. Like the Bolshevik, the Nazi system banks largely upon the eager fanaticism of youth.

THE SOLUTION

Ominous though the general atmosphere was, I saw no grids barring the doors we passed, as in some provincial Gestapos.

When we reached the lift only one of my black attendants got into it with me. The lift was of the non-stop type, into which not more than two people could safely step or jump off as it passed a floor. This type of lift has been nicknamed the Paternoster. When I asked why, the only explanation I got was that if you didn't jump off it in time you'd get crushed between two floors, "and then you'll feel like shouting 'Pater noster'!"

Stepping off Paternoster as it passed an upper floor, we moved along another corridor, a second youthful Black Guard who had been waiting at the lift having stationed himself at my other side, as downstairs. Eventually I was ushered into the presence of Commissar Braun.

He was a man of between thirty and forty. His hair was thick and wiry, his brows heavy, and this made his eyes appear more deep-set than they were. He wore mufti with no insignia.

He received me frigidly, without any greeting. But he stood up and motioned me to a chair opposite him.

"You want to know something about the suicide of the man Schweigler at Mies?"

I felt cramped by his hostility, but I was determined to put my case in my own way. So I answered: "I think it would be interesting to you if I could show you he was not Schweigler but another man, someone you wanted, and if I showed you that you had passport forgers here in Prague."

(Who would know about corruption better than he! But I had to pretend that it was an astonishing thing to me.)

"Yes, I have been told you think the man was Alfred Obry," he said.

I produced first the small photograph I had brought from London, and suggested that he should compare it with that on the Schweigler passport.

My heart beat quicker as he drew a file out of a drawer. The critical moment had come. Unless the whole case had been trumped up to deceive inquirers, the identity of Alfred Obry with *this* Friedrich Schweigler was to be irrefutably established or else disproved, when my search would have to begin all over again.

Out of the file he took a much befingered Czechoslovakian passport, and opening it at the photograph page laid it on the table. I put the little photograph beside it. The pictures were clearly of the same individual, though the photographs were, of course, different. I watched him compare them.

He bent over them for quite a long time with what seemed an amused smile. "Remarkable," he muttered to himself, "remarkable." If he was acting, if it was really not a matter of astonishment to him, then he was acting wonderfully well.

The sudden poignant doubt seized me that he *might* be acting—he *might* have known already that Schweigler was Obry—he *might* have had him done in to suppress the traces of corruption—he might still seek a loophole of escape from further inquiry. And there was one. The resemblance between the photographs was clear, but not being identical the identity might still be disputed. I produced the two photographs I had obtained from Frau Ludmila as a reserve.

"These are better, look," and I put them on the table. One of them was the identical photograph in the

Schweigler passport. The other was an unmistakable likeness. He took them and spread them out on the table with the passport.

"So these were all given you by the relatives in London?" he asked, comparing them all.

"Yes."

"You don't know when they were taken?"

"I have no idea."

He went on muttering, "Remarkable—remarkable." "And how do you think these photographs reached London?" he asked.

I was prepared for this pitfall. "He must have had them taken a good time earlier and sent them by post," I replied.

I asked if I might look at the passport, and he passed it over to me. It was certainly a wonderful piece of work. It was quite impossible to detect that Obry's photograph did not belong to it. The real Schweigler photograph, though it had been fastened on with one of those machines which are designed to prevent any tampering with the passport, had been removed and Obry's substituted without the slightest trace of the operation.

I never forgot during the whole course of this investigation that I must conduct it with impartiality, and that in order to arrive at the truth Alfred Obry must be to me no more than a cipher; but as I held this "doctored" passport in my hands how could I help recalling the many times I myself, years ago, had used just such fabricated "documents of identification", passing now as a Serb, now as an Ukrainian, now as a Russian, as a Cheka agent, a postal official, a Red Army soldier, and on one occasion, exactly like Obry, with the passport of a dead man! I knew the whole gamut of emotions he must

have lived through, the fears and excitement of his adventure, the growing sense of apprehension as the frontier is approached, the suspense when papers are demanded and questions put, the outward indifference or bravado with which one strives to hide the quickened pulse and bated breath. But it had been easier for me, a young man then of twenty-nine, and I had had luck. How much more plucky of this elderly man of over sixty to defy the Nazis, give them the slip, and challenge them in this escapade! Though I had never known him, could I feel for him anything but the binding affection of the fellow-adventurer?

Braun had leant back in his chair and lit a cigarette.

I asked him what it was in the passport that had aroused the Gestapo's suspicions. I hardly expected him to tell me. But he answered promptly: "That was not what showed him up. It was the frontier permit. That passport is the best fabrication I have ever seen." (And I couldn't help thinking to myself, Bravo, Cherry! Bravo, Stepan!)

He took another paper out of the file—a flimsy sheet, typewritten, with a poorly imitated stamp and scrawled signature. It was the frontier permit. Its text stated that Friedrich Schweigler was entitled to cross the Czech-German frontier, via Pilsen, between certain dates.

"Look at that," said the Commissar derisively; "that is what gave him away. Everything about that paper is bad. It is not the wording we use, the stamp is a fake, and the signature an obvious forgery."

(I thought, bad, Cherry—bad, Stepan! When you brought this to Obry you ought to have seen how wretchedly it was done.)

THE SOLUTION

Braun was watching me with a look of dislike from under his bushy eyebrows. "How do *you* come into this business?" he asked suddenly.

I repeated the story I had told to other officials. When I had finished he said: "What more do you want?"

I told him I wanted to go to Mies to see the dead man's belongings and the place where it had all happened.

"But why?" he exclaimed. "What difference will that make? You have convinced yourself that Obry is dead. You can give us a statement saying this photograph is of Obry." And he tapped the picture of Friedrich Schweigler.

He wanted me to commit myself and have done with me—and then perhaps use my statement with designs on Obry's property!

"I beg your pardon," I retorted, "it is not for me, but for the relatives to determine identity officially. I cannot give you a statement. On the contrary, I want you to have that passport photographed for me and I will show it to whomsoever I think necessary."

"No, that will not be done," he said, frowning, and he went on to repeat that there was no need for me to inquire any further. Schweigler and Obry were obviously the same man, as I had correctly surmised. Obry—or Schweigler, call him which you will—had committed suicide and that was the end of it.

He was getting my back up by his manner, like the other Gestapo chief who tiraded about colonies.

"How do you know it was suicide?" I said. "The *Die Zeit* report said the body was *found* dead. That means there were no witnesses. It might have been something else than suicide."

"What else?"

"An accident—or he may have been done in by somebody."

He glowered and said he had heard of my suspicions. "You think *we* did him in. But you think that only because your English propaganda has given the Gestapo a bad name." ("*Einen bösen Ruf*" was the expression he used.) "You English are ready to accuse Germany of anything. The only way you can defend yourselves is to throw dirt at others."

I hated myself for my next words, but I simply *had* to say the same as I had said before. "It is not I who suspect you," I said in as conciliatory a tone as I could. "I am acting for others. It is they who have to be satisfied. The *Die Zeit* report is not convincing."

He said he had never seen the newspaper report and asked me to bring it to him. "How did you find it?"

This was one of the questions I most feared. To gain time I said: "May I explain that when I bring you the paper to-morrow?"

But there was worse to come. He said: "Good! Come at this time to-morrow. I will keep these photographs," and he gathered them up. I had already turned to go when I heard him make a little exclamation. I stopped to see what had attracted his attention. He had turned the photographs over and was looking at their backs. One was blank, but the other was rubber-stamped. "The photographer's name and address," he chuckled.

I went out of the room with a sickly feeling. I had not thought to look at the back of the photographs when I took them from Frau Ludmila.

It was a grave oversight. I had slipped the photographs into an envelope at Frau Ludmila's, and it had

never occurred to me to see if the photographer's name was on the back. But it was, on one of them, and Braun had found it, and was, of course, sending the photographs at once to the photographer to find out when they were taken and anything else he could about their subject. The photographer would say they were done on Good Friday and Braun would see that I had lied in saying they must have been taken much earlier. How should I defend myself?

Besides this discrepancy I should also have to explain exactly how the copy of *Die Zeit* had come into my possession—and give an explanation, I reflected, that must spare Haller. For if I chose the easy path of truth and admitted that Haller had first shown me the newspaper, then that meant that Haller would be hauled up to explain how *he* had first seen it; and that meant the betrayal of everyone implicated in the affair—for I could not imagine Haller, left to himself, having either the courage or the intelligence to do anything but blurt the truth and betray everyone. Through Cherry and Stepan and their courier associate it would then come out that I had all the time had clandestine dealings with the very people who had procured for Obry his false documents.

Haller, however, I realized with dismay, might be called up before the Gestapo anyway as having been connected with Obry in business. So the whole problem really resolved itself not into what I, but what Haller would say under cross-examination. There was nothing for it but to belabour Haller into repeating some story which I, meanwhile, must invent.

Faced with these entanglements, and desiring above all to protect those who had been implicated in the plot, I completely forgot for the time being the further problem

of probing the detailed circumstances of Obry's death. In an unenviable frame of mind I repaired to my favourite bar and sought consolation and inspiration in a stiff drink.

I soon began to see a few cracks in the thunder-clouds. The photographer, for instance, might not have kept a record of his passport clients. Obry might have given no name and surely would not have given his real address, and even if the photographer did remember having taken the photographs on Good Friday, still Obry would have been able to send copies to London by post as I had said. But to any discerning person this was a very weak point in my armour, for would any sane man in Obry's position send his photograph, taken for such a purpose, through the censored post? Still, failing a raft, I had to clutch at straws. It was just a conceivable explanation provided Braun was willing to think Obry such a lunatic.

As for Haller, I must get hold of him and coach him in what to say about *Die Zeit*.

But Haller crumpled up at the mere suggestion that he should take part in deceiving the Gestapo.

I met him at a secluded restaurant in the evening, and so as not to spoil his dinner I let him finish his entrée before I broached the subject. Then I told him of my visit to Braun and that I had to go back next day to explain how *Die Zeit* was found, and I warned him that he also might be questioned later. "Now listen," I said, "this is the story I have invented and that you must repeat. I shall say that one of Obry's sons, who has been already some time in England, had interests at Reichenberg and so subscribed to *Die Zeit* and had it sent to him regularly to London. I shall say he came across the reference to Friedrich Schweigler quite by accident, and it

struck him because the name was the same as that given by a third party who had met Obry during his attempted flight. Now *you* have never had anything to do with the sons, so you cannot be called upon to explain what those interests in Reichenberg were or be questioned about them at all. You must say *I* first showed you the newspaper. I shall say I brought it with me from London."

Ashen grey, Haller seemed completely to shrivel up. Even this simple and logical invention was too much for him. He protested again, as he had protested when I chided him for concealing so many facts from me, that he dared not risk his position by becoming involved with the Gestapo. "Besides," he said, "I have two secretaries. They both know something about the affair. They both have seen Obry and Cherry and Stepan in my office. The Gestapo is sure to question them too."

"You must coach them."

"No, no, I cannot. It is too risky. They might, after all, give the situation away. No, I must tell the truth. And why," he added desperately, "shouldn't Cherry and Stepan suffer for having ruined the plot through that bad frontier permit?"

I saw I must instil the fear of God into him somehow. "Don't you realize," I said, "that Cherry and Stepan would at once say that *you*, as an associate of Obry, were the main instigator; *you* devised the whole plot; *you* persuaded them and bribed them. They would say all that to save their own skins."

At this he put his head in his hands and groaned. After a while he suggested that we should go and talk to Frau Ludmila about it.

That gentle lady took the matter more calmly.

"But your invention is very clever and sounds perfectly reasonable," she declared.

"Of course," I said. "I am sure it will go down with the Gestapo, only Herr Haller refuses to repeat it."

Haller protested abjectly. "I dare not, *gnädige Frau*. I dare not conceal the facts. My whole position is at stake. The Gestapo would be sure somehow to find out the truth and then it would go much worse with me. Besides, my secretaries might give everything away. I must say Cherry brought me *Die Zeit*."

I saw in Frau Ludmila's eyes what she thought of Haller at that moment. But she also saw, as I did, that it was useless to argue. Even if he had been persuaded to try to repeat my version, he would certainly have bungled it when facing the Gestapo.

Seeing the situation, Frau Ludmila made a sensible suggestion. "We must warn Cherry," she said. And she immediately sent her nephew, who throughout the interview had said nothing but sat watching Haller with contempt, to tell Cherry of his danger. "Tell him he need not fear to-night, but that from to-morrow he must 'go underground' until he hears from us again." Stepan was already "underground", so there was no need to worry about him.

When her nephew had gone, Frau Ludmila added: "Now everything depends upon whether the Gestapo manage to find Cherry."

But that was not the precise truth. "Everything *still* depends upon Herr Haller," I said.

I don't suppose any of us, on our side, slept much that night, unless it was Frau Ludmila, whose spirit was imperturbable.

THE SOLUTION

I myself on leaving her house strode along the street until I reached the embankment of the Vltava. A bright sickle moon, set in the jewelled sky, shone over the river, whose dark waters bore away the fairy-tales so touchingly told by Smetana in his beautiful symphonic poem. For a moment I put Obry, Haller and the Gestapo out of my mind, and listened to the fairy-tales. Even they were regarded askance by the Nazi administration, which had just imposed on the city a *Deutsche Kulturwoche*—a German culture week—designed to demonstrate to the Czechs that they had no culture of their own, but owed to Germany every feature of civilization and beauty they possessed—presumably even the fairy-tales of the Vltava, or the silver sickle moon and the spangled sky cut by the turreted outline of the old Bohemian city. And to support their case, with typical Nazi tact they strove to “win” the hearts of the Czech people by behaving as if Dvořák, Smetana, and Suk were mere musical hucksters whose works should never be listened to by the truly “cultivated”. I crossed the Karlov Bridge and watched the reflected lights of the embankment dancing in the troubled stream. Finally I walked back to the top of Wenceslas Place and stood before the bronze outline of Good King Wenceslas. It was well after midnight when I returned to the Alcron.

I looked into my suit-cases for any signs of a search during my absence. If they *had* just been searched they had been left tidy enough. I always left them unlocked—the Gestapo would have found nothing in them. I had thought earlier in my investigation to leave slips of paper inside my luggage with the request, “Please leave tidy after rifling.” But I had desisted. The Nazis are not strong in humour. They might have thought: “Ah,

he *expected* to be searched—that means he *is* guilty of something! ”

To and fro I strode in my room long into the night. How to handle the interview with Braun on the morrow so as to elude his further questioning? Would he have found out from the photographer that I had lied as to when the photographs were taken and how I had obtained them? Could he find out that I was shielding the conspirators? If he did, I pictured myself lodged next night in a Gestapo cell. It seemed to me that the only watchword left was Brazenness. But it is not easy for me to work myself up to being brazen. My natural bent is toward conciliation, subtlety, perhaps cunning. But my resources of these were exhausted, and to a man like Commissar Braun conciliation meant only weakness or admission of wrong. There was nothing for it but to be brazen, to bluff, to take the high hand. I must indicate that I am not the beneficiary but the conferrer of favours—do I not do the Gestapo a service in clarifying a mystery and in revealing to them that they have black sheep in their midst? I, I will say, am a busy man, I have not much time to place at the Gestapo's disposal, I have come back at Braun's request to show him *Die Zeit* but I cannot stay more than a minute, I have another appointment, I have been recalled urgently to Berlin, important affairs connected with the publication of my books, meetings with ambassadors, and so forth. Perhaps, if I can carry this off with a high hand I can forestall his questions, elude interrogation, not even give him a chance to begin. And if he does begin I must indicate hastily that I shall, of course, be delighted to be of further service, but it must be at a more convenient season.

THE SOLUTION

Should I be able to get away with it?

I snatched a few hours' sleep, had breakfast and dressed, then stood irresolutely beside the telephone. Irresolutely. . . . A bad beginning for brazenness. . . . I lifted the receiver. "Operator, get me the Gestapo. Ask for Commissar Braun."

I waited for the answering ring.

"The secretary of Commissar Braun speaking."

"I want to speak to the Commissar personally. Say it is the Englishman who came to see him yesterday."

"Ja?" I recognized the gruff voice of Commissar Braun.

"Herr Commissar, I regret that I am recalled to Berlin urgently. I can only come and see you this morning, not this afternoon."—"Ach, that is inconvenient. Can't you——?"—"I regret," I insisted, "if you wish to see me it must be before twelve."—A moment's silence, then: "Then please come at eleven-thirty."—"Good"—and I clamped the receiver down.

My first thought was: *He* said "please", not I!

By the time I set out my plan was clear-cut. I would show him *Die Zeit*, and while he was still reading it I would ask *him* something, some detail about the case, to check questions from his side. I could ask him what time and what day exactly, according to his reports, the death had occurred. I had thought to leave these details until Mies, but I would ask them now. I had always assumed that the earliest likely day of death (if Obry really was dead) must be at the end of the week after the day of flight, Easter Monday, April 10th, because of the persistent reports of "release" on the 16th and the appearance of the notice in *Die Zeit* on the 17th. To ask for confirmation of this point would be a perfectly natural

request to Commissar Braun.

Once my mind was made up I no longer suffered the torture of internal fears. In the hall of the Gestapo I presented myself before the man dispensing passes. To-day it was I who gave *him* an "oily" look. It was returned with interest, but I didn't mind that. Doubly black-guarded as before I was again conducted via Paternoster to Commissar Braun.

I had the enormous satisfaction, when announced, of seeing him break off an interview to receive me. "*Ein Moment, ich bitte,*" I heard him say to the visitor being shown out, who was evidently to wait in the corridor during my interview. I marched in briskly. Braun was standing beside his desk.

"There is the paper you wanted to see," I said without other greeting, handing him the copy of *Die Zeit* opened.

He read it at once, muttering again, as yesterday, over the photographs, "Remarkable, very remarkable . . ."

I burst in before he had finished: "By the way, Herr Commissar, I have only a moment, and you are engaged, but would you mind telling me the exact date and hour the supposed suicide was discovered?"

He put the newspaper down and, still standing (I also had not sat down), drew out the file.

"The body was discovered on the railway near Mies at eight o'clock in the morning of Tuesday, April 11th, the day after his arrest."

"But . . ." I began, completely staggered by this information—then managed to check myself. "Thanks. I must go."

I turned to the door. At the threshold I still managed to say, "When I have finished my business in Berlin I want to go to Mies."

THE SOLUTION

I heard his voice: "I will tell them you are coming."

I added further, as if not I, but something inside me automatically spoke: "And the photograph of the Schweigler passport?"

"I will have it done."

I saw his hand outstretched. I felt it in mine. I heard his voice yet again. "*Guten Tag*. Thank you for bringing the newspaper." And the next moment I was out in the corridor.

I don't remember being escorted downstairs, coming out into the sunlight, walking along the street. I only remember next sitting in the bar round the corner over a stiff drink and repeating to myself over and over again: "He was dead within twenty-four hours? Already dead when the woman brought Haller the pencilled message?"

The whole interview, with its totally unexpected atmosphere, bewildered me as I looked back upon it. I had been prepared to hear, as I explained earlier, that Obry had died within a week of his flight, although even this meant that several of the main incidents of the case, such as the Chodau telephone call, and the sending of the telegram on April 24th saying Schweigler had continued his journey on the 16th, had actually happened after his death. But to be told that he was already dead when the first news of his arrest had been received came as a shock. And I still asked myself, was it true? Why had the Commissar been so civil? Why had he not even attempted to cross-question me?

I decided that I must fulfil my plan of leaving Prague at once as I had told Braun I would. In the hall of the Alcron I had a lucky encounter.

"Hullo, Bock," I called, seeing the familiar figure.

"Will you have a drink with me? I want to ask you something."

When we were perched on our stools at the bar he said: "Let's drink to Anglo-German friendship."

"Willingly," I responded. "To Anglo-German friendship" (and to hell with the Nazis, I thought, but didn't say). "What I want to ask you, Bock, is this: truly and honestly, did Braun already know about the *Die Zeit* report and about Schweigler and Obry being the same man, or was he *really* surprised to hear about it?"

Bock answered: "Braun telephoned to me yesterday after he had seen you, and he had a talk with Bergmann too. I can tell you that everything you have told him has caused him the greatest astonishment."

"Have the other half?" I suggested.

"All right—it's on me this time."

"All right. The same toast?"

"The same."

And I swallowed mine down with gusto.

X

I LEFT Prague by an afternoon train, hurrying away to confirm the departure I had announced to Braun, and before he could send me any message. Things had taken such a turn that I had only one anxiety, which was to leave them as they were.

The only person I saw before leaving was Frau Ludmila, who came to see me off. I told her she might safely say to Cherry that he need not yet "go underground", but that he had better keep ready to do so in case Haller was called by the Gestapo. I urged Frau Ludmila to impress upon Haller that more responsibility than ever lay with him for what might happen. Everything depended now on what Haller would say if cross-questioned.

I did not feel comfortable until I saw the spires and towers of Prague receding into the distance. Then I, at least, was no longer immediately accessible. I breathed more freely and began to sum things up.

From Bock I had learnt things that threw great light upon the morning's interview. I knew just what Bock and Bergmann must have said to Braun when more closely questioned about me, that their references would be friendly, and that Braun could not fail to be impressed by all the things Bergmann would be sure to repeat. This alone might account for Braun's change of manner. But would he accept it all at face value?

The most vital thing I had learnt from Bock was that the Gestapo had really been taken by surprise by my revelations. Obry, I now realized, had truly been arrested on account of his papers. I myself had seen the frontier permit that brought about his downfall. But the Gestapo had had no idea who he really was! This did not quite exclude all possibility of Braun or his "front door" colleagues having done the fugitive in, but it reduced the motive to nil. It also cut out the fear that they might have tampered further with the passport simply to deceive me. What would have been the most likely procedure on arresting an unknown individual with a patently false permit? Would it not have been to hold him as long as possible in order to find out how he had procured the forgery?

So unless the statement of the time of Obry's death was untrue—and I counted on confirming or refuting this at Mies—it almost completely eliminated the theory that he had been murdered by the "front door".

There remained the "back door". The motive on their side had always been strong, for not only exposure but their very existence was at stake. How soon could they have heard the news of Obry's arrest? How soon could they have sent their agents to Mies, organized a decoy, and staged the "suicide"?

We passed the German frontier at Lobositz, and the train wound its way along the curves of the river Elbe through the lovely scenery of Saxon Switzerland. I went into the restaurant car for coffee. Several passengers were there, watching the play of the late afternoon sunlight on the rugged cliffs across the river. A young man came in shortly after me and sat down at a far table. His face was familiar and I wondered if I knew him. Perhaps he might

THE SOLUTION

recognize me if our eyes met. I was always keen for a talk, and tried to catch his eye. I did after a time, but he made no sign of recognition and I turned again to the scenery.

Instead of going on to Berlin I got out at Dresden and went straight to a telephone booth to call up Fred at Berlin. I wanted to arrange with him to accompany me to Mies. If I failed to reach him on the telephone I could still take a later train and arrive in Berlin that night. If I did get him it would save me that journey, and I could pass the week-end more agreeably in the pleasanter city of Dresden. I had the luck to find him in, gave him to understand in duly camouflaged terms that things were going well and there was less danger than was foreseen, and asked him to meet me on Monday at Carlsbad. He promised to do so.

"You won't let me down this time?" I insisted.

"No, I promise. I was ill when you telegraphed last time."

Free from all anxiety for forty-eight hours, with not even Commissar Braun able to call me back, for he would think me to be in Berlin, I went to an hotel, arranged to spend Sunday afternoon with people I knew at Dresden, and meanwhile repaired for supper alone to the delightful restaurant Belvedere overlooking the river, where I jotted into my notebook in my cipher-language in minute handwriting the events of the crowded days I had just spent in Prague.

On Sunday morning I went to the German Museum of Hygiene. This institution represents one of the finest achievements of the Nazi administration, and is illustrative of what it might have done for Germany and the world if it had kept itself free from perverted doctrines.

The museum is devoted to anatomy, physiology, nutrition, child welfare, maternity care, the social services and hygiene in general. It is a complete educational course in pictures, charts, apparatus and working models. No expense was spared in its construction. The chief show-piece among many is the anatomical Transparent Man, a more than life-size model of a man made out of glass and celluloid whose internal organs light up from inside one after another by pressing a series of buttons. Besides this, there are hundreds of working models ingeniously contrived with springs and elastic to demonstrate every kind of joint and muscular movement. For singers there is an especially interesting section dealing with vocal organs, and showing, with musical instruments at hand, how tones of different timbre are produced. Unfortunately even this excellent institution, which has its equal nowhere in the world, has now been prostituted to political ends. Since the autumn of 1938 one whole wing has been transformed into an antisemitic propaganda section, a revolting contrast to the purely educational aspect of the main portion of the museum.

Among the working models is one in which I took particular interest. It is an apparatus for testing lung capacity. Extending from the wall is a tube, into which one blows through a little adjustable cardboard mouth-piece obtained fresh by every experimenter from a slot. Behind the wall is a vessel into which the air blown through the tube passes, and the volume is indicated on a dial facing the blower. A table shows the average lung capacity of people of different height, weight and age. According to this my capacity should be from 3 to 3½ litres.

I was pleased to find that I blew this volume with ease,

and I went on blowing over and over again to see what volume I might with practice arrive at. A warden surprised me at this occupation, and assured me that few people blew over 3 litres. A party of Italians ("Axis visitors") came along under a German Brown Shirt guide. Not desiring an audience, I surrendered the tube and stood aside to watch their efforts. With much amused cackling and disputation they applied themselves to the test. The first man, a stunted little fellow with a high-pitched voice, succeeded amid derision in only arriving at the 2-litre mark. Others did better, and the Brown Shirt guide, a big fellow, blew nearly 3½ litres, to his own immense satisfaction and the admiration of Axis partners. Whereupon they were about to move away when the warden, who had been watching, pointed at me and to my embarrassment said: "You should see what that gentleman can blow." My first instinct was to escape. But cornered—literally, for I had stood in a corner—I took the tube and prepared to blow. For a moment I thought, "I will stop at 3 litres so as not to outdo them and attract attention." But this craven thought was immediately followed by a bolder one, namely: "Why shouldn't the Peace Front have a whack at the Rome-Berlin Axis? If I've got to blow I *will* blow." I was in trim, having already blown several times before their arrival. I took one or two preparatory breaths while I obtained a fresh mouth-piece from the slot and adjusted it, and then started blowing. Quite a crowd had now gathered, and there was a hush while attention was focused upon the dial. To harbour my forces I blew slowly. When the dial had passed the 2-litre mark, I heard someone whisper: "He won't reach 3." When it reached 3 I heard the Brown Shirt guide shift his feet uneasily. It reached 3½ and I

still had plenty of reserve. There were muffled exclamations. It was perhaps a good thing the Brown Shirt didn't know I was an Englishman or he might have dashed the tube from my lips at this challenge to Teuton supremacy. Meanwhile exclamations grew louder as the dial reached 3·6, 3·7, 3·8, 3·9. The little man who had blown only two litres clapped. I also heard a "sapristi" or two. The dial touched the figure 4. I was coming near the end of my tether, but could still blow. 4—4·1—4·2—4·3—4·4—*four and a half!* I was exhausted. I had been pressing with all my might from the solar plexus and all the chest muscles. I released the tube to recover breath. When I looked up the Rome-Berlin Axis had dispersed. The Brown Shirt guide was hastily taking the visitors to play with the vocal chords and the larynx muscles. Only one or two people stood admiringly by. The warden said: "*Das hab' ich noch nie gesehen.*" And I moved away, still recovering breath.

But I stopped suddenly, and caught my breath again—for a very different reason. I had caught sight of a figure standing near a show-case in the middle of the room. It was a young man who had obviously been observing the performance. When he met my eye he immediately turned and walked rather quickly away, and this was what disturbed me, for why should he hide himself even if we *had* seen each other somewhere before—yesterday in the train from Prague, to be precise. Then I had thought I had already seen him before that. Where? Quickly I reviewed the array of faces and places of the recent stirring days—and there he was—fixed—in the Gestapo—one of my youthful Black Guard attendants—in black uniform then, but now in mufti—following me—at Braun's orders of course!

THE SOLUTION

I walked everywhere about the museum to encounter him again. If I could overtake him and let him see clearly that I had recognized him and knew what he was up to it might disconcert him and he might desist, or follow so far off that I could give him the slip. But I didn't find him. Had I been mistaken? Impossible! Everything about the Prague Gestapo had impressed itself too clearly on my mind. Why was Braun tracking me? Just a measure of precaution? What could this young man have seen? Frau Ludmila at Prague station? She had joined me for at most five minutes in the waiting-room. I should certainly have noticed him if he had been there. But he might have kept track of me through the window. Or he might have learnt the time of my train at the Alcron, for I had ordered my ticket there. In any case an elderly lady having a cup of coffee at the same table in a waiting-room would be unlikely to attract attention. What else? My telephone call to Fred from Dresden station? That was from a booth, he couldn't have overheard it even if he saw me enter. No, I felt I was all right. Only would it be wise now to stay on at Dresden? Having said I would go to Berlin hadn't I better do so? I sought a street telephone booth, rang up my friends to cancel the afternoon party, and was in Berlin in the evening. In the train I walked along the corridors looking for my unwelcome shadow. There he was, in the corner of a second-class compartment. Should I speak to him to confuse him, reminding him of the Gestapo? But there were others in the compartment. I stood outside until he saw me staring at him. He looked away out of the window again at once. I stood there for a few moments longer, then returned to my place. I didn't watch for him particularly on arrival at Berlin, and never saw him again. What

could he report to Commissar Braun? One thing at least to my satisfaction—that I had outdone the Rome-Berlin Axis in blowing hot air.

Carlsbad again. And Commissar Rugel again. But what a different reception! Though he had received me not uncivilly on the first occasion when I had been brought to him by Kanowsky, he had refused to do more than read out to me the description of Friedrich Schweigler's clothing and was very stiff in his attitude. Now he came running up the steps, apologizing that I had been kept waiting a few minutes because he had been obliged to go out unexpectedly.

"I have been wondering when you were coming," he said. "There have been messages about you from Prague and Berlin. What can I do for you?" He had become quite a cheery fellow.

I asked to see the protocol again.

He got it out and I read it together with him. Naturally the first thing I looked for was confirmation of the date and time of finding the body. It was exactly as Braun had stated—the body was discovered lying in such-and-such an attitude at such-and-such a point by a schoolboy named Hawel from such-and-such a village *at 8.15 a.m. on Tuesday, April 11th*. The point was on a little bridge "16½ metres west of the distance mark 380-6-615/50." There were also further data which it would be necessary to confirm on the spot.

I showed him the *Die Zeit* report, which though printed at Reichenberg had been received from Carlsbad, and asked him if he could explain it. He read it with great curiosity and said it was the first time he had seen it. He called his secretary to show it to him. The secre-

tary said newspapers often telephoned for titbits of news. He himself didn't remember having said anything about the case, but it was possible some other official had.

"Have you been to Mies yet, as I suggested?" Rugel asked.

"Not yet."

"They are expecting you. The Commissar there is a man called Neumann, a nice fellow. He seems to have treated your man very well, allowing him to go to the local hotel. He will show you all you want."

The hotel was called Hôtel Schober, I saw in the protocol, and made a mental note of it. As for Neumann, I had heard his name because it was mentioned in the letter from Madame Prosser, who wrote that Commissar Neumann, although strict, had been very courteous to her. But I knew from my experience with the Cheka that leaders of terroristic organizations can sometimes combine the most antagonistic qualities, lamb-like demeanour in private life with bestial ferocity in the execution of their functions. Dzerzhinsky, the organizer of the Cheka, was, like Torquemada, a musician, and a model father to his family. But that did not prevent their sending thousands to the torture chamber and the stake—nowadays the wall.

I thanked Commissar Rugel and parted from him cordially. "By the way," I said, "if it is not a state secret, may I ask what the messages about me were that you have had from Berlin and Prague?"

"Only that we are to open everything to you and give you every aid we can."

He accompanied me to the entrance and shook my hand warmly. "Heil Hitler! Ring me if you want anything."

When I reached the gate he was still standing in the doorway.

Fred was waiting for me outside in his car. He had not let me down. But his readiness to come was partly explained by the fact that his wife was taking a cure at Franzensbad, about twenty miles away, and she now sat at the wheel, having just driven over to Carlsbad.

Fred himself had come from Berlin by air. After my abrupt change of plan at Dresden I had arranged in Berlin to precede Fred to Carlsbad by train so that we should not travel together, and he had followed next morning by aeroplane. I went out from the Grand Hotel Pupp to meet the autobus on its arrival from the aerodrome. But I ran into Fred standing beside his suit-case at the steps of a little footbridge over the river. Those who know Carlsbad will remember that to arrive at the Hotel Pupp cars have to drive some distance up the river before reaching the road bridge. Fred had got off at a footbridge and carried his suit-case across. He met me without a smile, looking as if he had just been removed from a coffin after premature burial. He explained that it had been very rough up in the air. I was to discover that he was, or pretended to be, suffering from severe lung trouble which made it impossible for him to mount stairs and difficult to do any walking at all. Even a few steps exhausted him, he said. The result was that during all my subsequent negotiations, instead of having his active assistance, as I had hoped, I had to do most of the visiting and talking alone. Whether he was really as unwell as he said I could never quite make out, but one thing was certain, he had made up his mind to be actively involved in my investigation as little as possible, and con-

THE SOLUTION

fined his collaboration to taxi-ing me about and waiting for me in his car or in hotel bars. However, even for this I was very grateful, and soon saw that he would have been more hindrance than help if he had been mixed up in the inquiry. Meanwhile there was always the *Ehrenzeichen* in his buttonhole and the impressive figure of his Reichstag uncle in the reserve background.

I called the porter to fetch his suit-case and he went into the hotel for coffee and recovery. While he waited for the arrival of his wife I went along to the Gestapo to see Rugel, arranging for Fred to follow. Thus it came about that he and his wife were waiting for me when I came out.

We decided to drive over to Franzensbad where Fred and his wife were staying with friends, and that I should stay the night with them while we planned the visit to Mies.

But there was still something to be done near Carlsbad. The reader may remember that shortly after Obry was reported by the Gestapo "back door" to have been released on April 16th, Haller received a mysterious telephone message from a village called Chodau, near Carlsbad—a message which was assumed to have been from Obry, who announced himself as "Schweigler speaking", and said he needed "material to continue work", which had naturally been interpreted as money to continue his flight; and the reader may further remember that the attempt to elucidate this curious incident had resulted in a tangle of contradictory evidence from which nothing emerged but a suspicion that the Gestapo might have played a dubious and provocative part in it. Although I was now to all intents and purposes satisfied that Obry had already been dead a week when this incident occurred

(unless the protocol which I had just seen turned out to be a complete invention), I was extremely interested to discover, if possible, the real background of the Chodau incident. Chodau was on the way from Carlsbad to Franzensbad, so I resolved to stop there and make inquiries at the Novak factory, whence, it will be recalled, Schweigler's telephone message was supposed to have come.

As this particular inquiry concerned only past history and had nothing to do with my present approach to the Gestapo, Fred willingly enough agreed to help in it, and I took him in with me to do the talking, thinking the people might more readily answer him than a foreigner.

The result was very remarkable.

I remember once having a discussion with Valentine Williams on the subject of coincidences, during which he said that the coincidences that actually do occur in life are at times so incredible that he would never dare to put into his stories some of those which had happened in his own experience because readers might regard them as a challenge to their intelligence. I thought of that after my visit to Chodau. For the only logical explanation I could find to the incident involved a truly extraordinary threefold coincidence of name, time and telephone connexion.

No one at the Novak works remembered the telephone calls of two months ago, and the photographs I showed of Obry were not recognized. But I found that the proprietor Novak did in fact have an assistant whose name bore a strong resemblance to Schweigler. The name, however, was not Schweigler, but Schweigel. Schweigel often had occasion to telephone on business matters to Prague. His office was in Carlsbad, but in telephoning

THE SOLUTION

he would naturally mention Chodau where the factory was. The only conclusion to be drawn, therefore, was that Schweigel, telephoning to Prague on April 19th, which happened to be three days after Obry's reported release, must have obtained a wrong number which happened to be Haller's. What more natural than that Haller, mistaking the name of Schweigel for Schweigler, had at once concluded that it was Obry communicating his whereabouts and asking for help. The subsequent mix-up, involving supposed questions to the Novak factory by the Carlsbad Gestapo, had been reported only by the courier, whose account might have been a distortion or (like the reported release) a sheer invention.

Thus one more very crooked piece in the jig-saw puzzle of my investigation fell into its proper place. The picture was nearing completion. Would anything happen to prevent the finding of the still missing pieces?

While we drove on to Franzensbad I told Fred briefly the essentials of the case. He was inclined to think me naïve. He thought I had been bamboozled from A to Z by the Gestapo and that I still ran a foolish risk in going to Mies. He had made inquiries, he told me, since we had last met, and had heard that this particular Gestapo "had an especially evil reputation". The number of people, he asserted, who had been last seen or heard of at Mies, never to be heard of again, was legion. Mies, he declared, was spoken of as the gateway to Dachau, Buchenwald, and all the most dreadful concentration camps of Germany.

The atmosphere which Fred dispensed was funereal. Nor was it relieved by the presence of his wife, for although she seemed a quite worthy (but also quite insignificant) person, they spent most of the time nagging

at each other, disagreeing about everything to such an extent that she could hardly sound the horn or change gear without his challenging the necessity or manner of the act. Fred was neither a jovial nor an inspiring companion. There were moments when I heartily wished him back in the grave from which he seemed to have arisen for a temporary lease of jaundiced existence.

As far as Mies was concerned it was clear that he was exerting himself even now to dissuade me from pursuing my inquiry to its ultimate conclusion. But the more he scared and argued, the more obstinately I clung to my design. By a strange perversion he became a mainstay through his very protests. I think in the end I would have been prepared to dive headlong into the bottomless pit at a mere sign of dissuasion on his part.

But greatly though he disliked my undertaking, never once did he suggest deserting me in it. He had given me his word, and his word—even his most pessimistic and hypochondriac word—was his bond. With all his depressing characteristics Fred was a straightforward and honourable man. In the days I spent with him I came to understand his disillusionment in the Nazi party. I am sure that the aspect of Hitler's governorship that Fred most resented was his perfidy. The Führer's word had been shown to be worthless, both in internal affairs relating to his friends and in international declarations, and thereafter Fred, like many other Germans, continued to accept Hitler as Führer only under compulsion.

I had long talks with him about politics. His position was difficult because, though he detested Hitler, he was anxious not to lose the goodwill of his influential uncle, through whose patronage he gained many favours. Of the ultimate downfall of Hitler he had no doubt. At

THE SOLUTION

the same time he did not believe this could be achieved except by some terrific upheaval, for the appeal Hitler made to the mass of the German people was very potent. The fact that it was based not so much upon positive features as upon resentment against the wrongs of Versailles did not weaken it. Rather the contrary. Fred himself, though there was no doubt of the strength and sincerity of his detestation of the regime of which he was nominally a supporter, cast in the teeth of France and Britain many of the specious reproaches with which Hitler habitually flowered his propagandist speeches. Though Fred liked the English and French personally very much, he constantly reiterated that France and Britain were at fault for all that had occurred and that they were the "creators" of Hitler. I dare say he will now be making ill-health an excuse to avoid active war service, but I should be surprised if he did not hope for a German triumph. For it was impossible to eradicate from his mind the mistaken conviction that Britain and France were bent upon completely crushing the German nation.

Despite his melancholic temperament and at times highly irritating manner, I contracted a genuine liking for him for his sincerity of view and his determination, regardless of personal fears, to do me the service he had promised without any hope of reward and merely to repay a debt of gratitude.

It had been my intention to go to Mies and stay two or three days there. But against this Fred took up a firm stand. His proposal was that we should motor over from Franzensbad in the morning as many times as necessary, but return in the evenings. He said he didn't mind how early he had to get up for this. But stay a night at Mies

he absolutely refused to do. His plan, as things turned out, was by far the better one, and I had reason to be grateful for it, as the reader will see. I wished to lose no time in starting, and accordingly before eight o'clock next morning we were on the road to drive the forty-odd miles to the little town of Mies.

XI

THE town takes its name from a rapid river that ripples down the valleys of the Sudeten mountains and eventually, through tributaries of the Vltava, contributes its share to the fairy-tales told by swirling waters in the city of Prague. Approaching from this side of the hills, you discover the town huddled on the steep left bank, the white tower of the church and the belfry of the Rathaus standing out in lonely prominence. A picturesque old stone bridge bisected by a turreted shooting-tower—sole remnant of vanished ramparts—leads from the station on the opposite bank. For the visitor the town has neither interest nor attraction. Its old Rathaus, dominating a square of imposing proportions (inevitably renamed Adolf Hitler Platz), is the only building worth casting a glance at in driving through.

The amenities provided for the three or four thousand inhabitants are meagre. But like most German towns—and Mies when under Czechoslovakian rule was German-speaking—it is tidy, and the stranded traveller might find worse accommodation than that of the only inn, for which the proprietor, Herr Schober, has discarded the simple designation Gasthaus in favour of the more exalted "Hôtel Schober".

Mies lies about half-way between the pre-October and post-October frontiers of 1938. For twenty years it was in Czechoslovakia. Since its incorporation in the Reich one would search in vain for a single trace of the vanished Czech supremacy. Already before the Nazi occupation

of Prague it was made the control point of the important railway from Prague to Nuremberg, South Germany and Switzerland. Travellers in either direction were examined during their passage along this stretch of line, being taken out of the train and conducted to the Mies office of the Gestapo.

Oddly enough—at first sight—the Gestapo was housed two miles distance from the station, even quite beyond the town on the far side. Arrested travellers were made to walk down the slope from the station, over the old stone bridge, up the steep street, across the vast market place, and farther up a less steep but still rising road to a building beyond the farthest outskirts. When I asked the explanation of this seemingly inconvenient location it was for a long time not forthcoming. My question met with evasive answers or a shrug of the shoulders. But Fred said he elicited it finally from the civic undertaker who plays a prominent part in the remainder of this narrative. The explanation was to be found in the barracks opposite, whose cellars, according to the undertaker, were conveniently used for conducting executions without noise.

Across this square and along these streets, towards noon on Easter Monday morning the gentleman who passed as Friedrich Schweigler had trudged to his doom, carrying his "sort of black suit-case" (as Frau Ludmila had expressed it), and escorted by guards. And now, nearly three months later, after long preparation of the ground, having dug myself in, as it were, to secure each position gained, I had arrived to solve once and for all the riddle of his disappearance.

About the same hour as he had mounted the steps of the innocent-looking villa that housed the Nazi inquisi-

tion, I too mounted the same steps, to face the same inquisitor, in the same room.

I had long looked forward to this encounter. There was no figure in the panorama of my quest that aroused my curiosity more than Commissar Neumann. He was the first Nazi official we had heard of in the case, the man described by Madame Prosser as "kind and courteous, though strict", but who, according to Fred, enjoyed far and wide a reputation for unbridled barbarity.

No guard stood at the garden gate of the commonplace provincial villa, nor at the steps leading up to the little porch. Only when I had pushed the door open and found myself in a small hall was I accosted by a Black Guard with a rifle, sitting at the end of a bench occupied by a few simple folk who were waiting, to judge by the cardboard notice on the wall, for permits to enter the Protectorate.

"Commissar Neumann, please."

"Upstairs."

I went upstairs and knocked at a door marked "Inquiries".

I spoke to a clerk at the nearest table, mentioning the names of Commissars Braun and Rugel. A man at a desk in the corner pricked up his ears and rose quickly.

"Your name?"

"Herr Du-kess."

"*Ach, ja.*"

Bidding me wait, he went into the next room. Some minutes passed. At last he reappeared.

"Come in, please."

Two most unlikely men were waiting to receive me in a large, bare room with a desk set at an angle in the corner. The only decorations on the walls were the inevitable

portrait of the Führer and the equally inevitable reminder that the only truly German salutation was "Heil Hitler!" The man at the desk was fairly large and plump, with a pleasant, intelligent face. He looked about thirty, and was dressed in a light grey suit with a striped tie. "Neumann," he said, introducing himself. Making a gesture toward his companion he mentioned a name and rank which I didn't catch, but I believe the rank was *Polizeihauptwachtmeister*. I will refer to him as Neumann's assistant. This man was dressed rather like a Swiss or Tyrolean peasant, in shorts held up by leather braces over a khaki shirt; he wore stout boots and brown stockings. He was thin, hardy, rugged of countenance, with a hard, uneasy look in greenish eyes that shone out from under shaggy eyebrows. He was a striking contrast to his chief. Their division of rôles became immediately apparent, defined by the contradictory reputation which centred, of course, in the Commissar—"kind and courteous, though strict", combined with "a reputation for barbarity". In Neumann and his assistant I was faced with them both.

The Commissar sat down at his desk, I sat opposite him, and the assistant sat at the side, leaning on the desk.

"We have been told to expect you," Neumann began, fingering a paper in front of him. "A telegram from Prague and telephone messages from Carlsbad."

I could see my name, underlined, about a third of the way down the page. If that was the telegram it was a long one.

"You wish to know about the Schweigler case? Here is the protocol of it."

The paper he handed me was identical with the one

Commissar Rugel had shown me at Carlsbad. I had my own plan for checking up on its data—indeed Fred, if he was not being too afraid, was at that moment asking questions for me in the town. Meanwhile, I was most of all interested in getting Neumann's personal account, which I hoped would be more colourful than the bare protocol. So it was, and I reproduce it to the best of my memory in his own words.

"Schweigler was brought in here to me about midday on Easter Monday. He was an elderly man, plainly dressed, very nervous. At first he protested against his arrest and said in a bluffing manner that it was a scandal to molest decent passengers, and so on. He said he had a tailor's business at Prague and was on his way to Basle where he wanted to open a branch. There seemed no reason to doubt this, although he did seem rather too cultured a person (*'gebildeter Mann'*) to be a common artisan, travelling third class. However, it was not his appearance or manner that aroused our suspicions, but his papers. I am told you have proved his passport to be false. I must admit I never suspected the passport, it was the frontier permit that was obviously wrong. Braun showed it to you? You saw it was a bad forgery? Several things about it were suspicious, but what I actually caught Schweigler out with was the date. His story was that a man had come up to him while he was standing in the queue outside the Prague Gestapo and offered to get the permit for him out of turn for two hundred Kroner"—(two hundred Kroner—about ten shillings! I thought of the huge sum he had really paid!)"—"and as he saw no reason to doubt the man he had availed himself of his offer." (Not a bad story to have invented on the spur of the moment, I reflected.) "Then I said to

him: 'Herr Schweigler, you say this permit was issued to you four days ago, on April 6th; can you explain to me why it is dated March 30th?' He turned very pale, and when I handed him his permit to look at again, his hands trembled. He said: 'I only looked at the text, not the date. I have fallen into the hands of swindlers!''

Neumann paused and looked at his assistant who grunted corroboration.

"But there was another thing that gave him away," the Commissar continued. "The permit bore the signature of an official who was dismissed at the beginning of April for malpractices. We had been warned not to honour this signature on any further permits. So I detained Schweigler to make inquiries about him. I felt sorry for him—an elderly, well-mannered man. He almost collapsed—there—sitting in that same chair you are in. I see from the dispatch from Prague that you say he was someone else, someone important. But impersonation never occurred to me. We never suspected that, did we?"

His assistant shifted uneasily, but said nothing.

"He kept mopping his brow and repeating 'Swindlers, swindlers'," Neuman continued. "Had he been a younger man I might have detained him here or sent him over to the barracks, but on account of his age I decided to let him go to the hotel for his lunch. A few other elderly people were detained about that time too. On Easter Sunday I had arrested a Czech lady and a Polish gentleman——"

"Madame Prosser and Herr R.," I put in. I thought it just as well to let him know I knew a good deal about the case already.

"Quite correct," he said, surprised. "Those were the

THE SOLUTION

names. They seemed decent people. They came in just then to ask if the necessary information about them had been received. It had not, so I suggested that they should show Herr Schweigler the way back to the hotel. I had allowed them to go to the hotel, too. I kept his passport and frontier permit and his luggage here. But I forgot to take his railway ticket from him."

By the expression on the assistant's face I saw that he disapproved of his chief's negligence.

"I put through an inquiry to Prague about him and told him the answer would probably be received by the evening. He came back two or three times during the afternoon and hung about in the vestibule, asking if any information had come. The last time he came was about seven o'clock, when I was just closing up. By that time I had the information about Madame Prosser and the Polish gentleman with instructions to allow them to proceed. But there was no answer about Schweigler. When I told him this he was very upset, mopping his brow in great agitation. I felt very sorry for him and told him he might take some things for the night and stay at the hotel. He put a few things in a satchel, and as I was going to have supper at the hotel myself, I offered to drive him back in my car. But he excused himself, saying he was afraid he might not be able to sleep and preferred to walk about in order to work up the necessary fatigue (*'die nötige Bettschwere'*). At the hotel I told Madame Prosser and the Polish gentleman that they were free to proceed, and they decided to leave by the earliest train next day. I joined them for supper. During the meal Schweigler came in, still very agitated. I tried to reassure him. I told him it sometimes took a day or two to get the necessary reply from Prague. He sat down with us, and

when I left he was still sitting with the Pole and the old lady. I told him to come and see me at nine in the morning. But he didn't turn up, and shortly afterwards the police telephoned to say he had been found dead on the railway line. His head had been cut off and crushed by the wheels of a passing train and his identity was established only by his railway ticket which was found in his pocket. He had written his name on it. The hotel proprietor, who is supposed to keep an eye on the people I allow to stay there, said he might have slipped out of the hotel early in the morning as soon as the front door was opened."

Such was Neumann's story. I have tried to repeat in substance as he told it, but I often interrupted him to clarify points, and he appealed more than once for correction or corroboration to his assistant, who always replied monosyllabically, between his teeth.

From the moment of Schweigler's death the case had passed out of the hands of the Gestapo into those of the *Schutzpolizei* (regular police). Neumann had sent the dead man's papers and belongings to the magistrate at the town hall, and later the passport and frontier permit were sent back to the Prague Gestapo. The police had tried to find out something about him, but never succeeded. The only addresses they had been able to find among his things were English ones. This seemed curious if he was a Czech tailor going to open a branch in Switzerland, but as he was dead and nothing could be learnt about him the matter lapsed.

"His body was kept in the mortuary for four days and then buried," Neumann concluded.

"But who established the verdict of suicide?" I demanded, "and on what evidence?"

THE SOLUTION

"The police said it was obvious. I told them how agitated he had been, and the hotel proprietor said the same. He evidently killed himself in despair. Everyone agreed about that."

The Commissar said this with rather forced emphasis, and continued with some hesitation, consulting the dispatch lying before him: "I understand that you suspect us of having killed the man. Why should we kill a man who was, to us, nothing but a simple tailor?"

I shifted, as usual, the responsibility for this suspicion to the shoulders of others, assuming myself the attitude of the impartial investigator.

"You English have given the Gestapo a bad name," he added, using precisely the same expression—" *einen bösen Ruf* "—which Braun had used.

I let this pass without argument, but when he spoke of the suspicions of murder, which, as the reader knows, were my own, though I repudiated them for tactical purposes, I could not help watching the assistant, and I felt when I saw the expression on his face that Friedrich Schweigler's treatment at the hands of the Gestapo might indeed have been very different if they had had the slightest suspicion who he really was.

I thanked Neumann and took my leave, saying I would come again when I had seen the magistrate.

"Let me know if you want any help," he said. "Heil Hitler!"

His assistant showed me to the top of the stairs.

"I told the Commissar," he volunteered, jerking his head toward the room we had just left, "there was more wrong about that man than his papers. If I had had my way I should have taken him to the barracks. Then he

would never have given us the slip."

I walked into town by the road Obry had so many times tramped in a single day, and found Fred waiting for me at the Hôtel Schober. Commissar Rugel at Carlsbad had told me that Schweigler had been allowed to stay at this hotel, so I had sent Fred to ask questions there while I was at the Gestapo. Over lunch he told me how at an appropriate moment he had produced the photographs which I had given him and asked the head waiter if he recognized them. The waiter had looked at them intently and said: "But that is the man who stayed here and was found dead on the railway." He had called the other waiters and the maid and finally the proprietor, who had all recognized the photographs.

The proprietor came and talked to us at lunch, and I was afterwards shown the room the missing man had occupied.

After lunch I crossed the square to the town hall to call on the magistrate, Judge Schwarz.

The low-vaulted hall of the old Rathaus was dark, cool and quiet. From within, the glimpse through the archway of the big square, with stragglers clearing up after the morning market, was very picturesque.

I knocked at the door indicated. It was opened by a clerk to whom I stated my business. He closed the door again and I waited a long time in the corridor.

Commissar Neumann had hinted to me that I might not find Judge Schwarz an amiable gentleman to have to deal with. Judging by the reception he gave me when I was finally ushered in, Englishmen must have been his pet aversion and I the most objectionable specimen he had ever met. I found a gaunt figure of sour mien, bent

THE SOLUTION

over his desk. Looking up at me over the rims of his glasses as I stood in the doorway he said rudely: "What do you want?"

He knew quite well what I wanted because Neumann had telephoned to him, but I said politely: "I would like to see the things left by Friedrich Schweigler and the documents referring to him."

"On what grounds? Who are you? Where is your authority?"

"Commissar Neumann sent me."

"That is not what I asked. Where is your authority?"

"You mean a letter? I haven't any."

"Then you have no right to make such a demand. I should be justified in refusing it. If I allow you to see the things, it is out of consideration for Commissar Neumann."

He then said to the clerk: "Have the things brought here," and returned to his writing while I waited, standing, wondering whether I ought to make a demonstration.

The things were brought. The "sort of black suitcase" was a small trunk, quite new and evidently bought for the occasion. Besides this there was the satchel which had been found in the hotel bedroom, and a packet containing the contents of his pockets. These were laid on a table at the far end of the room, together with a file of papers.

"I want to examine everything," I said to the judge.

"Open the things," he ordered the clerk, adding: "Stand by and watch."

The clerk cut the seals and opened the trunk and satchel and packet, and I went through everything.

Judge Schwarz got up, went out and returned more than once while I worked, but gave me nothing but a

venomous glance. I listed the various objects, and surreptitiously copied out some of the documents when the clerk left the room for a minute.

"Will you allow me to take one object for his widow—his watch, or his cigarette-case?" I asked the judge.

"Certainly not."

He informed me in a surly manner that he had tried to find out who the dead man was, but at the address given in his passport nothing was known of him. When the civic undertaker, who was in charge of the body, had said it was impossible to keep it any longer in the mortuary, the judge had given the burial order.

"I would like to see the grave," I said.

"Take him round to the undertaker," he ordered, and I was led out without another word.

To meet the undertaker after the judge was like basking in sunlight after a hail-storm. This important functionary lived just round the corner in a side-street. Over the entrance to his place of business was a large and pretentious signboard with the inscription: *First Mies Undertaker's Establishment*. Beneath this was his name: *Joseph Kovar*, and under this again hung a large placard in decorative lettering: *Welcome*. The establishment to which one was thus hospitably introduced literally swarmed with coffins in every stage of preparation. One had the feeling that Miesians must be dying by the dozen and that Herr Kovar must be struggling to cope with the ravages of some fatal epidemic. Whether the requirements of the Mies Gestapo (barracks section) justified this output of coffins I never fully substantiated. In any case Herr Kovar seemed to take an artistic pride in his handiwork for its own sake and made the most advantageous display of it that he could, as much for his own satisfac-

THE SOLUTION

tion as for that of prospective clients. When we entered the courtyard that served in fine weather as his workshop he was vigorously planing a plank while he sang in a tolerably good voice a popular song. He laid aside his tool to listen to the explanations of the magistrate's clerk, then turned to me with outstretched hand.

"Heil Hitler, Herr," he said genially. Being a Sudeten Czech he was bilingual and spoke German well, having evidently had a good elementary education. "I will show you the grave. I assure you everything was done decently, tidily, orderly. Of course, the coffin was not *de luxe*—what could you expect—but it was decent and solid. Look, it was one like this——" and he tugged me by the sleeve to a shed where a row of plain black coffins stood against a wall.

"Good solid work, if plain," said the undertaker, caressing the nearest coffin affectionately and pointing out the perfection of its workmanship.

Herr Kovar described with a wealth of detail (which I will not attempt to record, partly because of its macabre nature and partly because the expressions he used were an untranslatable mixture of the officious and the improper) how he had been called to the *Tatort*—literally, the "deed place", the official word for the scene of a crime or accident—together with those officials who had established the facts of the "suicide". It had been his task to gather up the body and transport it to the mortuary. The word *Tatort* occurred so frequently in his description (he seemed to delight in its officious smack) that I can hardly help using it here—a very convenient term, incidentally—to refer to the scene of Schweigler's death.

"I will take you to the *Tatort* whenever you wish," he said.

I intended to avail myself of his offer at the earliest opportunity, but as the *Tatort* was some distance out of town and it was now getting late, I decided first to go to see the grave, and visit the *Tatort* next day.

The podgy little undertaker, with his ruddy face and dancing mischievous eyes, led me out-beneath his "Welcome" archway, and we walked round to the hotel. He squeezed himself into the back seat of Fred's car, and we drove to the cemetery, about half a mile out of town. The undertaker clambered out and with eager gestures preceded me through the iron gate, above which was a shabby Madonna who badly needed a fresh coat of paint. Fred followed slowly behind. He found it impossible to keep up with the lively undertaker.

"I tell you," repeated that gentleman for the third or fourth time as he hurried me along the central avenue between rows of white and grey marble and simple iron-railed graves with commonplace epitaphs, "I tell you, Herr, everything was done decently and orderly. Couldn't have been better done, considering the circumstances. Hey, Wurm, hey!" And he brandished his arm to a man who appeared in his shirt-sleeves in the distance, carrying a spade.

"Herr Totengräber Wurm—Mr. Grave-digger Worm," said Mr. Civic Undertaker Kovar, introducing me with proper ceremony when that functionary approached. Mr. Grave-digger Worm shifted his spade and took my proffered hand in his firm grasp. He then wiped his hand on his corduroy pants.

"Show us the way to number 61—you know, the Schweigler grave," ordered Kovar.

We followed the spare figure of the grave-digger to a far section only sparsely covered with graves. Herr Toten-

gräber Wurm pointed to a plain earthen mound. It had no decoration of any sort, no flowers, no plants, no inscription, nothing but a metal disc with the number "61" on it.

"There you are," declared undertaker Kovar as if he were pronouncing a triumphant verdict, "that is where he is buried. I told you, everything was done decently and orderly. Wasn't it, Wurm?"

The grave-digger nodded gravely, leaning on his spade and pensively scratching his chin.

"Tell me about the burial, please, describe it," I said.

"Well, we kept him in the mortuary four days—there," said the undertaker, pointing at a building near the gate and speaking as if he were describing a market or fair. "Then I said to the magistrate, 'We must bury him.' The magistrate said all right, so Wurm and I buried him."

"Yes, but—but what priest officiated? Who else was present?"

"Priest? No priest. No one." Kovar seemed surprised at my question. "I just said to the magistrate, 'We must bury him', the magistrate said all right, so Wurm and I buried him. That's all. At sundown. Just about this time."

"But were there no witnesses? No one but you two? No record of it?"

Kovar cast a sidelong glance at me. Wurm kept his eyes on his superior.

"Witnesses?" said the undertaker. "Why should there be witnesses? Wurm and I just buried him."

"In this grave?"

He began to eye me with definite suspicion. "Yes, here, number 61."

I said no more, thinking perhaps I had said too much.

As we retraced our steps the undertaker took me up a

side alley and said: "Here, Herr, I want to show you something. Look, that's my tomb. Magnificent, ah? My old woman and I lay bets who will be tucked away in it first—only what is the good of winning a bet like that? Ha, ha!"

The tomb was a large one in grey marble, pretentious in design, with the name cut in large gold lettering. His parents were already buried in it, he said, "only there is plenty of room for more, we shan't get in each other's way even if we get up to have a party."

I could think of nothing appropriate to reply to this—still less to what followed. "Ha, ha, I think I'll have central heating put in before my turn comes. Why not be comfortable, especially if it is going to be for eternity! I might like a washstand, too, and——" But I draw the line at recording the remaining conveniences planned by the blithe undertaker for his sepulchral existence.

We came out again to the car. Kovar squeezed his podgy figure into the seat beside me.

"By the way, Herr," he said ingratiatingly, "the bill for everything I did . . . and the coffin . . . it isn't paid yet. Will you pay it?"

I hesitated a moment. "Yes, when I—when the grave——"

"And you won't forget the grave-digger, will you?" he went on, not noticing my hesitation.

"No, you can be sure I won't forget the grave-digger," I assured him.

When the jovial undertaker had been once more deposited at his workshop, Fred and I turned homewards and drove back to Franzensbad.

On the way I told him of my visit to the magistrate

THE SOLUTION

and the essentials of my interview with Neumann. He again told me I was too naïve when I said Neumann had impressed me as a decent fellow. "Look out," he said gloomily, "they will ingratiate themselves and then deal you a stab in the back. Is it any comfort to you that the old rascal Kovar will bundle your remains unceremoniously into one of his black coffins and bury you neatly with number '62' on your grave?" Fred removed one hand from the wheel, snapped his fingers in the air, and exclaimed viciously: "How do you know Schweigler is really in number 61? *Anybody* might be buried there—or it might be empty. You don't trust that rascal undertaker, do you? . . . Or is Herr Totengräber Wurm for you a final authority?" he added sarcastically. "No witnesses to the burial! No report of it! Don't you see they are fooling you?"

I relapsed into thought, hoping that at Franzensbad I could escape to solitude. After dinner I went out for a walk beneath the stars to think. I was certain Neumann, at least, had not had Schweigler murdered. There was a point beyond which it was quite unreasonable to suspect every word of being invented, every paper fabricated, every chance person prompted. Besides, I knew from Bock in Prague that my revelations regarding Schweigler's identity had come as a complete surprise to the Gestapo. As Neumann had said, why should they murder a wretched unknown tailor simply because his papers appeared not to be in order?

No, it was not the Gestapo "front door" who had done him in. But still there remained the "back door"—Hermann and his associates, whose first consideration would be to destroy the traces of their complicity.

And then there was the question of the grave, as Fred

truly said. Doubt had sprung up in my own mind at the cemetery. *Was* Schweigler—Obry—buried in that grave? *Must* I take it on trust? Why had the burial not been officially reported? Why was there no record of it anywhere?

“There’s nothing for it,” I said to myself; “I must have him dug up.”

And with that decision I went to bed and slept soundly.

XII

THE medical officer of health of the town of Mies, Dr. Toller, had his office in an old stone building which you entered under a low archway leading into a vaulted hall. At the end of this was a narrow flight of stairs with a rickety iron railing, at the top a landing whence a number of doors opened. On one of these, an old oak door hanging awry on its hinges, was pinned a slip of paper with "Consulting hours 8 to 12" written on it in pencil.

When I knocked, and entered in answer to a loud "*Herein*", I found the doctor sitting at a table at the end of a long, bare room. Standing in front of him, stripped and in the act of pulling on his trousers, was a recruit. The doctor did not look up, and I wondered what would have been the procedure if the visitor had happened to be a lady.

"*Ein Moment*," said the doctor, still bending over his writing. I waited in the middle of the room while the recruit pulled his shirt over his head and tucked it in. The doctor handed him a paper and dismissed him, saying, "Here you are. Heil Hitler!"

Then he looked up at me. He was a small man with a neat little beard.

"*Ach, guten Tag*, are you the Englishman? Commissar Neumann has just telephoned."

The proper channel of introduction to the medical officer was really through the magistrate. But after

Judge Schwarz's reception of me the day before I thought I had better fight shy of him. So on the way into the town I had stopped off at the Gestapo and spoken to Commander Neumann, who greeted me warmly.

"How are you getting on?" he asked.

I told him of my visit to the cemetery. It seemed to me an extraordinary thing, I said, that a man should be buried in that haphazard fashion. The burial order had been given only verbally, in a most off-hand manner, there were no witnesses, no priest had officiated, no record kept of the day, hour, or place of burial. The word of the undertaker and grave-digger was all there was to go on. "I don't wish to appear to disbelieve your authorities," I said, "but what proof is there that Schweigler is buried in that grave? I am not satisfied. I wish an exhumation to be performed."

Commissar Neumann frowned, pursing his lips, and shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"I have nothing more to do with the case," he said. "You will have to ask the magistrate, but I don't think he will agree."

"Judge Schwarz? If it depends upon him I am sure he won't agree"—and I told him of the surly way in which Schwarz had received me.

"Well, go and see the medical officer. He is a decent fellow. I'll tell him you are coming." He gave me the indications how to find Dr. Toller. "But you won't find it easy to get an exhumation," he added as he showed me out.

Thus it came about that I took the seat offered me by Dr. Toller at the side of his desk. Neumann had evidently acquainted him with my request. He leant over with one arm on the table, drumming it nervously with his

fingers, while with the other hand he rubbed his knee.

"You want an exhumation of the man who committed suicide on the railway? Why?"

I explained that I was charged with identifying him. He asked if I was a relative. An order for an exhumation was a difficult thing to obtain, but in any case the request must come from the nearest relative. Had I a letter of authority from the relatives? No letter? Nothing at all? Only a photograph of the dead man? That was no authority, and besides, what good was a photograph when the corpse was mutilated, and now, after many weeks, would be still more unrecognizable?

"I have means of identifying him by the clothing," I insisted.

I had the feeling that the little doctor wanted to oblige me, and this as the result of something Neumann had said, but there was clearly a difficulty somewhere.

"I shall have to consult the magistrate," he said.

"Judge Schwarz?"

"Yes."

He was gone a long time, and when he returned I was not surprised to see from his expression that he had brought a negative reply. He slunk back into the room without looking at me, opening the door only just enough to slip through, glancing back outside before shutting it again gently and crossing the room shrugging his shoulders.

"It can't be done," he said, "can't be done. Besides, you ought to have applied to the magistrate first."

"Then I will go and see him about it myself," I said, getting up to go. At the door an idea occurred to me. "By the way, Herr Doktor, if I bring this inquiry to a satisfactory conclusion I intend to settle all accounts con-

nected with it, and as I see there will be some trouble for everybody I will double all the bills and fees. But I *must* have an exhumation."

He made a deprecating gesture about the fees. "No, no . . . not necessary." Then added in a confidential manner, "I'll try. . . . I'll see again if something can be done. . . ."

Instead of going straight to the magistrate I crossed the road to the business premises of the undertaker. I had sent Fred in to talk to him while I was at the doctor's. When I entered the courtyard and saw them together I couldn't help thinking how much more appropriate they would look in reversed rôles, Fred as the funereal undertaker and Kovar the jovial commission agent. We were going to drive out to the *Tatort*—the scene of death—as arranged, and while Kovar went indoors to fetch his hat Fred said to me: "I have been listening to a deluge of profanity such as I have never heard. The old fellow says he didn't like the German occupation but it is making him rich. Besides supplying 'the barracks' he has a contract for a concentration camp, he says."

The *Tatort* was only about a kilometre from the town as the crow flies, but to drive to it was a long way round, across the river by the old turreted bridge, past the station, then by a country road into the woods. Leaving Fred to drive back alone, the undertaker and I descended by a footpath to the railway.

The footpath passed underneath the railway through a narrow tunnel the like of which I have never seen elsewhere. It was only wide enough for one person to enter at a time, and the path which led down to it entered it at a sharp angle and continued to descend steeply and unevenly

THE SOLUTION

throughout its length. The tunnel was built of stonework, and on the railway above, a railing on either side of the line showed where the masonry began and ended. This was the only indication to anyone walking along the line that there was a bridge there at all.

Instead of descending into the tunnel the undertaker led me off the path on to the railway line and to the railing. "Here, on this little bridge, was the *Tatort*," he said importantly.

The railing was about thirty feet long. Fifty yards or so to the east the single track disappeared round a bend in a cutting. To the west it ran straight for a quarter of a mile and then curved round towards Mies station, which was about two kilometres distant. On the side from which we had approached, the bank rose steeply to the top of the hill. On the other it descended, thickly wooded, to the river.

"This is the exact spot," said the undertaker, placing himself about a yard from the western end of the bridge on the embankment side.

I noted carefully his indications of the position of the body and his description of its condition. He explained that the trunk lay front upwards nearly at right angles to the line, fully dressed and clad in an overcoat. The head had been completely severed and crushed by the passing train. The right hand was torn off. The position of the right arm suggested that "in laying himself down" the dead man had either put his right hand under his head or extended it so that it lay on the rail.

The corpse had been discovered at eight in the morning by a schoolboy named Fritz Hawel from the neighbouring village of Svinna. He had come upon it by the path by which we had descended, on his way

to school. He had rushed into the town to tell the police. A policeman, a doctor (not Dr. Toller, but his colleague), and the undertaker with an assistant carrying a coffin had then proceeded to the spot. The doctor declared the man to have been dead about two hours. The contents of the pockets were removed, and the doctor ordered the undertaker to gather up the body and transfer it to the mortuary. He had done so, laying the corpse in the coffin fully dressed exactly as it had been found. Thus it had been buried four days later.

All this Kovar related in a businesslike manner without any trace of the flippant tone in which he referred to his own affairs; indeed, when I said that the deceased had left relatives to whom his death had been both a mystery and a great loss he professed his sympathy—real, perhaps, in view of his contact with Gestapo operations—and never once did he refer to Friedrich Schweigler in other than respectful tones.

We set out to walk back to the town by the path by which the deceased must have arrived at the railway line. My mind was occupied with noting the details of the route. After leaving the bridge and passing through the tunnel we descended a steep path to the river. A foot-bridge led to the other side, and we were crossing this when the undertaker stopped and said abruptly: "Excuse me, Herr, but can you tell me what the fare is from Cuxhaven to Hull?"

I stared at him in astonishment.

"The fare . . . from Cuxhaven . . . to Hull? What has that to do with Friedrich Schweigler?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," he replied, "only I have been thinking recently of going to live in England, so I got a booklet, and I saw that ships go from different ports, and

THE SOLUTION

I thought you might know which way would be the cheapest."

"Going to live in England?" I repeated, my thoughts suddenly switched off the Schweigler tragedy by this unexpected query. "Why?"

I leant back against the railing of the footbridge, watching him. He stood in front of me, smiling rather awkwardly, shrugging his shoulders without answering.

"Have you ever been to England? Have you friends or relatives there?"

"No," he replied, "I have had my business here for many years. But of late I have thought . . . well, I thought I would like to go and live in England."

He fished in his pocket and brought out some travel bureau prospectuses. They were well befingered. He had evidently been through them many times. "The station master is a friend of mine and got me these," he said. "He said Cuxhaven was a good route, only here it doesn't give the fares"—and he pointed to the page referring to Cuxhaven.

Dimly I began to guess what might be going on in his mind. "Tell me, Herr Kovar," I said, avoiding the personal question, "how are things here in Sudetenland since it was taken over by Germany?"

For a long time he was silent—but by no means expressionless. He stood there repeating over and over again a highly eloquent gesture consisting of raising his eyebrows, pursing his lips, shrugging his shoulders and throwing out his arms and letting them fall to his sides. At last, after a number of "Hm's" and little coughs, and when I had repeated my question insistently, he began to speak in broken sentences, always punctuated by the same gestures: "Well, Herr . . . of course there is better order

... and there is cleanliness . . . and there is punctuality. . . . There are no workless, everyone is occupied usefully and gets paid regularly. Streets and roads are being remade, houses are being built. . . . And there is equality between the classes, there aren't any more 'uppers' and 'lowers'. . . . Every workman feels himself as much a man as his master—though discipline is maintained, oh yes, discipline is maintained, but there is mutual respect between masters and men. . . . And the *Fürsorge*—the social welfare—is excellent. . . . Think of it. My son got married. Well, he was given a marriage allowance of a thousand marks by the state, to be repaid in instalments of fifty marks, but as soon as a child is born the payments will be postponed, and after the fourth child the debt will be cancelled. . . .”

“Well?” I queried, more and more astonished. “It sounds absolutely wonderful. Why do you want to leave it and go and live in England where you know nobody and can't talk the language?”

Once again he was long in answering, and stood making gestures and shifting his feet. “Well . . . Herr . . .” he said at last, “how shall I express it? There isn't such a feeling of *Menschlichkeit*—of being a human being. The Germans are too machine-like. And the party men strut about like bullies. *They* don't believe in equality. There is no *Gemütlichkeit*—no ‘cosiness’—in the system, Herr. After all, every man gets tired of being a cog.” And then he gave vent to a remark that I pondered upon long after. “Society, Herr, ought not to be run like a barracks; it ought to be run like—well, like a club. . . . That's the difference.”

A wonderful distinction!

“But what makes you think of emigrating to Eng-

land? Why not to France, or Sweden, or America? ”

“ I have read about them all, Herr, and I like England best.”

“ You think England is run more like a club? ”

“ Yes, Herr.”

We moved on across the bridge and up a winding path through the town park, talking again of Friedrich Schweigler. But the undertaker's questions had intrigued me deeply. I was curious to know whether the things Fred had repeated to me as having been said to him by the undertaker—about executions at the barracks and about Kovar's getting rich under the Nazis—were founded on fact or whether they were merely a product of the undertaker's more frivolous mood. So when we were about to part in the market-place I said to him: “ But aren't you doing well here? Isn't business flourishing? Do you want to give it up? ”

But this time he replied: “ Excuse me, Herr. . . . I think I had better not say any more. . . . Good morning, Herr. I am at your service if you want me again. Heil Hitler! ” And he walked away across the square.

I made up my mind I would treat the kindly undertaker well when the time came to settle his bill. He should have a liberal contribution to his journey. And his friend the grave-digger, too, whom he had asked me not to forget.

I had thought to call on Judge Schwarz after lunch to demand the exhumation, but disliking the idea of facing that gaunt, unpleasant figure a moment before it was necessary, I first went to see the doctor again to find out if his further efforts had met with any success.

He announced that he had seen the magistrate a

second time and that it was quite impossible to arrange an exhumation. I felt my gall rising, as sometimes happens when thwarted stupidly, and resolved to bring my heavy artillery into action. I said somewhat as follows: "Herr Doktor, Commissar Neumann will tell you that he had instructions to assist me from the Gestapos at Prague and Carlsbad who had instructions from Berlin. Do you know why? Because the friends and relatives of Friedrich Schweigler, who was really someone else and very important, suspected that he had been *murdered*. I want you to tell Judge Schwarz, if he wishes to have confirmation of this, to telephone to Dr. Bergmann at such and such a number at such and such a place, who is a personal friend of Conrad Henlein, the governor of this province, and to Herr Wolf at the Gestapo headquarters at Berlin and they will confirm what I say. He can also telephone to the heads of the Gestapo at Prague and Carlsbad. Tell him to say, when he telephones to them, that the word of Commissar Neumann, the head of Mies Gestapo appointed from Berlin, was not good enough for him. And tell him this, too, from me, that suspicion is bound to fall on those who refuse to assist me. Say that if I don't have the exhumation I shall go back to Berlin and tell the authorities that the magistrature of Mies is grossly negligent, they bury the unfortunate dead in a careless manner, without witnesses or records, and I suspect that the man called Schweigler is not buried in that grave at all, and that Judge Schwarz knows it and therefore bans an exhumation."

I thought the little doctor would tell me to go and say all this to Judge Schwarz myself, but he didn't. He sat rubbing his knees and looking embarrassed, but not at all displeased; indeed, quite the contrary.

"Wait a moment," he said, and went out of the room.

I waited a long time. At last he came back, rubbing his hands and looking as pleased as Punch. "The exhumation will be done," he said with great satisfaction. "I will go and tell the undertaker to make the arrangements."

But at that moment there burst into the room an ugly little man with a face that looked as though his forehead and chin had been squeezed together with pincers so that eyes, nose and mouth were bundled in a sort of pit in the middle. He came hurriedly up to Dr. Toller, saying excitedly: "Listen, don't go on with this; it isn't legal; you can't do it. . . ."

Dr. Toller, embarrassed, said to me by way of introducing the intruder: "My colleague, the doctor who examined the body."

The colleague gave me a curt nod, and continued emphatically to Dr. Toller: "You can't do it . . . it isn't legal. . . . You place *me* in an embarrassing situation. . . . I cannot consent. . . . I must even protest . . ." and a great deal more.

Dr. Toller evidently felt that this dispute in my presence was undignified. He led his protesting colleague out of the room. I heard the argument being continued on the landing, then I heard a door slam as the two doctors retreated to another room.

Again I waited, thoroughly intrigued and genuinely suspicious. So it was the doctor who had examined the body and recommended the verdict of suicide who now protested against exhumation? Why? And what an odious little fellow he was, too. The idea of being treated by such a physician!

I waited the best part of an hour this time. Then

Dr. Toller returned, alone. He crossed the room, gesticulating expressively. When he spoke it was almost triumphantly. "*Wir werden es doch machen, nur privat*—we will do it after all, only privately."

"What does that mean—'privately'?"

"Well, there will be no protocol, no official report."

"But I don't care about an official report," I exclaimed. "All I want is to see with my own eyes who is buried in that grave!"

"*Schön, schön*, I will arrange everything. Wait a minute!" And again he went towards the door.

I couldn't resist a question. "Tell me, Herr Doktor," I called after him, "did you tell the judge what I said? Did he like it?"

The charming little man threw his arms into the air, turning his eyes up to the ceiling. "Heavens!" he exclaimed, and went out with a suppressed laugh.

Ten minutes later he came back and handed me a paper. It was an order to open the grave of Friedrich Schweigler, typed on a form of the *Landrat*—the District President (corresponding approximately to the head of a county council)—and addressed "To Herr Wurm, Grave-digger, Mies". The text ran:

At the request of Herr Paul Dukes of England the exhumation of the body of Friedrich Schweigler is to take place at 8 a.m. to-morrow. I request you to commence the opening of the grave early, in order that the coffin shall lie exposed in the grave at eight o'clock.

Signed on behalf of the District Medical Officer.

"I will ask you kindly to come into the next room to pay the tax on this order," said the doctor, "then I will go with you to the undertaker to tell him to make the

Der Leondrat.

Gesundheitsamt

296.-Nr.

Es wird ersucht, dieses Exhumations, bei
Datum und bei Gegenstand bei weiteren
Erhebungen anzugeben.

Mies, den 22. Juni 1939

An Herrn

W u r m, Totengräber

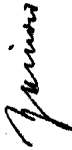
in M i e s.

Über Ersuchen des Herrn Paul B u k e s aus England
findet die Exhumierung der Leiche des Friedrich Schweigler morgen früh um
8 Uhr statt. Ich ersuche Sie mit der Öffnung des Grabes frühzeitig zu beginnen,
auf dass der Sarg um 8 Uhr früh frei im Grabe liegt.

Im Auftrage:


Amtsarzt.

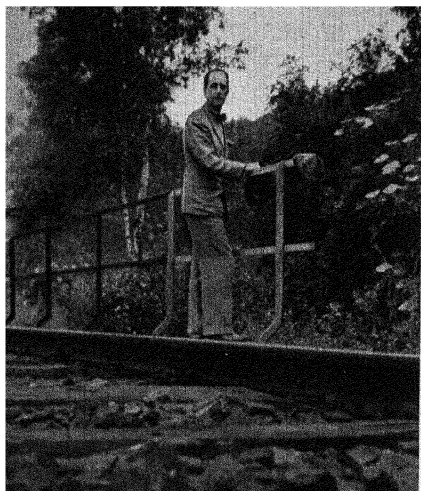
- Der Leondrat
den 22/6 1939



EXHUMATION ORDER (for translation, see text)



THE UNDERTAKER



THE AUTHOR
AT THE "TATORT"

THE SOLUTION

necessary arrangements, and as you have a car will you please drive to the cemetery on your way home and show this order to the grave-digger. Then I will meet you at the cemetery to-morrow morning at a quarter to eight."

I paid the tax, and we went across to the undertaker's. When all arrangements were made I returned to Fred, who had had a slack day waiting for me at the hotel ever since driving back alone from the *Tatort*. He would hardly believe it when I showed him the exhumation order. When we had driven to Mies that morning he had ridiculed the possibility of obtaining it. "Anything but that," he had said.

I dropped in at the Gestapo to tell Neumann I had got the order and ask him to send a Gestapo man to be present at the exhumation as witness. He agreed at once.

"You are very persevering," he said. "I believe it is a quality of Englishmen, isn't it?"

"I had a bit of bother with the judge," I said, and told him of the message I had sent through the doctor.

He laughed loudly, and shook my hand warmly as I left.

I liked Neumann very much. He was a really decent fellow. But his assistant, whom I met on the stairs, gave me a dirty look.

XIII

To arrive at Mies in good time we set out an hour earlier next morning. Fred's pessimism had vanished. He was quite excited at the turn events had taken. He was to be my witness at the exhumation and take the photographs. For though Judge Schwarz had insisted that there should be no official record of the exhumation I was resolved that there should be a record, a photographic record, and I was going to take the photographs without asking Judge Schwarz's or anybody else's permission.

We arrived at the outskirts of Mies and turned into the side-road leading to the cemetery. A hundred yards from the gates two figures stood in the middle of the road—the doctor and the undertaker. The doctor was brandishing his arms, signalling to us to stop.

He stuck his head in at the window. "It can't be done after all. The *Landrat* (the district president) himself objects. He sent an order last night to cancel the exhumation."

By now I was prepared for anything. "I shall have to go and talk to the Landrat," I said.

Doctor and undertaker climbed in and we drove to the Landrat's office in the market-place. I mounted the stairs of another old stone building with dark halls and vaulted ceilings.

It was just after eight o'clock. Business hours had commenced. The Landrat had come in, I was told, but would be occupied for some time. I sat in an office with two women secretaries. On the wall hung the usual

THE SOLUTION

instructional placard regarding the greeting "Heil Hitler", and a set of rules for good German employees, the first of which was: "Remember Adolf Hitler is always right."

After about half an hour the door into the inner cabinet opened and I saw to my surprise the ugly face of Dr. Toller's medical colleague. He looked exactly like a magnified specimen of a human foetus a few weeks old. After a glance at me he withdrew.

"So that little twirp is up to his dirty-dirty here too," I said to myself.

The Landrat's ban on the exhumation took on a new light. It was already clear that factions existed in this little provincial town perched among the Sudeten hills. Clearly Dr. Toller and Commissar Neumann were of one party or type, while the latter's assistant and Judge Schwarz and Dr. Toller's colleague were of another. Fred, to whom I was often indebted for enlightening comments, had said when I told him of the previous day's events, "But, of course, they are all jealous of each other. And you talked of double payment! Do you think that hasn't gone round? Toller's colleague is sure to have had his ear to the door when you were talking to the doctor!" Fred held that Neumann, to avoid too much responsibility, might pretend not to have anything more to do with the case, but he was head of the Gestapo, and the Gestapo ruled Germany, so Neumann would certainly have the last word.

Fred was right. I was about to have a demonstration of Gestapo power. When I had waited in the Landrat's office another half-hour one of the secretaries was called in to the cabinet and returned to bid me enter the august presence.

The Landrat was an unimposing figure for so exalted a personage. He looked rather like a provincial salesman. He received me very stiffly. I don't know whether he intended to shake hands, but I extended mine politely and said "Heil Hitler!" He seemed surprised at this. So did the foetus who stood behind him, whom I ignored.

The Landrat sat down at his desk and motioned me to a seat opposite him. The foetus continued to stand at his side.

"What is this matter of an exhumation? By whose authority are you demanding it?"

I had to go through the whole story again. But practice had made me perfect. By now I knew just what little touches most counted, what I could safely exaggerate, what I could add or suppress with most effect. And I drew a picture designed to impress him that he had come in on an international issue of far-reaching importance. The thing that puzzled him most was why he had heard nothing of it, why it had been left to the foetus at his side to come and inform him that dire things were being done in his precincts without his knowledge.

I couldn't say why the Landrat had not been informed if it was improper to make such arrangement without his knowledge, but on the subject of general secrecy I said as usual that my inquiry was being conducted unofficially and confidentially for diplomatic reasons, and that Commissar Neumann would confirm that urgent orders to assist me had been received "from above".

"Commissar Neumann? Does Commissar Neumann know about it? I will telephone to him."

But the foetus restrained him, and whispered something in his ear.

The Landrat hesitated, then said: "None the less, I think I had better ask Neumann."

When the connexion was made he said: "Commissar Neumann? The Landrat speaking. I have here an Englishman about an exhumation. I stopped it because——"

But he got no further. From across the desk I heard Neumann's voice thundering into the telephone. I caught a good deal of what he said. He was giving the Landrat hell. He said he knew all about the case, he had sent a police officer to the cemetery two hours ago, the exhumation ought to have been all over by now, and the Englishman ought to have been given every assistance.

The Landrat winced when this tirade began, and beckoned to the *fœtus* to bend over and listen in. That individual, while Neumann was still shouting, did something at which I almost laughed out loud. He said hastily to the Landrat: "Oh, then I give my consent"—and I realized at once that this was said for my benefit! The little sneak wanted me to think *he* was number one. Fred was right, he was merely jealous, or else he thought he could get in on the fees.

The Landrat was striving to placate Neumann with assurances that everything would be put right. When he had hung up the receiver he said to me in a weak voice: "Then it is in order. You may proceed with the exhumation."

"Yes," put in *fœtus*, "it is quite in order."

I thanked the Landrat. He shook hands obsequiously. *Fœtus* stepped forward and put his hand out. But I said "Heil Hitler" to the Landrat and went out without looking at the other.

Herr Grave-digger Wurm had made all preparation at the cemetery. The uniformed police official sent by Neumann was in attendance. The doctor, the undertaker, Fred and I slowly approached. I looked down into the open grave. A black coffin lay exposed, smudged with clay. It was a plain coffin, with no adornment but a simple cross.

The doctor turned to me.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Then open the coffin," he ordered the grave-digger.

After some labour the grave-digger succeeded in freeing the lid. We stood with bared heads as a headless body came into view.

I looked down upon the mutilated remains of Alfred Obry.

I instructed the grave-digger to do the things that were necessary. I will not go into details. Suffice it to say that I convinced myself that the corpse I now saw was that gathered up on the railway line, Friedrich Schweigler, and also Alfred Obry.

Those who stood by no doubt thought I gave the instructions in a matter-of-fact enough tone. But it did not reflect my inner feelings. For I experienced the same emotions as when I had held his false passport in my hands at the Prague Gestapo. We had taken the same sporting chance, Obry and I, but I had been lucky and he unlucky. When all that I required was done I swallowed the lump in my throat and said to the doctor: "Thank you, Herr Doctor, the coffin can now be closed."

We watched this in silence, then left the cemetery.

THE SOLUTION

Late that afternoon, as dusk fell, I returned. Once more a plain neat mound was the only monument to Alfred Obry, a metal plate with a number his only epitaph.

His relatives in London had no knowledge of these events. It had been quite impossible to communicate, either telephonically or in writing, the tortuous and sometimes risky steps which had led me to the end of my quest. But on behalf of his family I placed a wreath on the mound and decorated it with flowers.

The exhumation being "unofficial" I was not allowed to put any name on the grave. But as a tribute from myself I wrote on a leaf from my note-book: *To a good sportsman from the fellow-sportsman who found him.* Folding it small, I left it underneath the flowers on the grave.

The only other event of the day had been a visit to the village of Svinna, where we found the schoolboy who had discovered the body on his way to school, and heard his description of it.

Fred and I spoke little driving back to Franzensbad. It was his last day with me, for he had to return to Berlin next day on business. I saw him off early in the morning. I myself was going back to Prague, by train, but stopping off at Mies on the way, for I still had something very important to do, namely, to determine how Obry had really met his death if he had not been murdered by the Gestapo "front door".

As the train emerged from its winding course through the Sudeten valleys the towers of the church and Rathaus came into view, clear-cut against a blue sky in bright sunlight. I got out at the straggling little station at which

Obry had been removed from the train, made my way to the Hôtel Schober, ordered coffee and asked to speak to the proprietor.

By this time I was a familiar figure at the hotel. The proprietor greeted me like an old guest. It was a warm day, market was being held and the square hummed with life.

"Can you remember when you saw Schweigler for the first time?" I asked.

The proprietor remembered it well. Schweigler had been brought in by the elderly lady (Madame Prosser) and the Polish gentleman. "They sat down to lunch about two o'clock. The menu was chicken that day——"

"You have a good memory," I interrupted.

He explained that he often took the customers' orders personally. "But the reason why I remember what Schweigler had to eat is that he wrapped up part of his dish in his paper napkin and a newspaper when he thought no waiters were looking and put it in his overcoat as he went out."

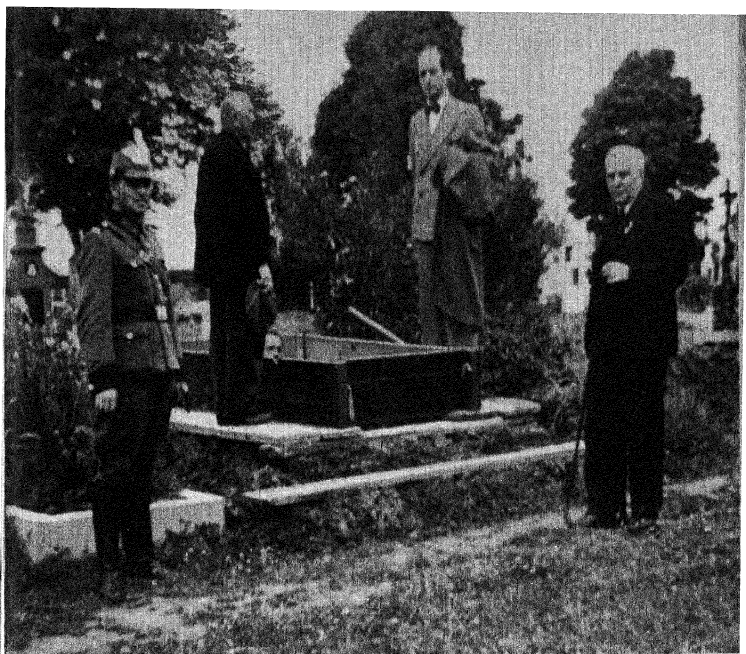
I duly noted this interesting detail.

The proprietor had thereafter seen little of him until the evening when he took a room for the night and joined Madame Prosser, the Polish gentleman, and Commissar Neumann at the supper table, as Neumann had told me. Schweigler, he believed, had spent most of the afternoon hanging about the Gestapo, or going to and fro between the hotel and the Gestapo.

"Do you remember what he had for supper?"

"Yes, cutlets—and again he wrapped up one of the cutlets in paper."

After supper he had gone up with Madame Prosser and the Polish gentleman to Madame Prosser's room,



AT THE CEMETERY

Left to right : Gestapo Officer, the Undertaker, the Sexton (in grave), the Author, the Doctor



THE GRAVE OF A SPORTSMAN

Durchlaßschein Nr. 987

Der — die Kneul Linkes
(Vorname, Familienname, Beruf)

aus England
(Mündiger, Wohnort, Straße, Hausnummer)

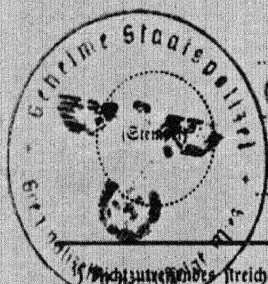
ist berechtigt, unter Vorlage des Passes (Paßsahes) ¹⁾)

Nr. 3290,

ausgestellt von Mr. J. L. von Lunden

in der Zeit vom 21. 6. 1939 bis zum 28. 7. 1939

einmal ¹⁾) — wiederholt ¹⁾) — über die an der Grenze des Protektorats Böhmen und Mähren amtlich zugelassenen Übergangsstellen in das Gebiet des Protektorats einzureisen und dieses Gebiet wieder zu verlassen.



Miss, den 21. 6. 1939

Geheime Staatspolizei

(Dienststelle)
Grenzpolizeikommando

M. 2. 2 (Grenzengau)

Schatt

¹⁾) Nicht zuzurechnen: Freichen.

¹⁾) Bei Reichsangehörigen ist nur ein Paß, bei Ausländern ein Paß oder Paßsah zulässig.

THE SOLUTION

where they sat talking till about ten o'clock. The maid had heard them as she passed along the corridor. After ten he had gone to his room, but was heard walking up and down restlessly. How long, no one knew, for the servants were all abed by eleven, except the porter who locked the front entrance at midnight.

"What time was the front entrance unlocked again?"

"At 5.30 a.m."

"After that servants were about?"

"Yes."

"That means that if Schweigler had wanted to go out between midnight and five-thirty he would have had to call a servant?"

"Yes."

"Would many people be about in the hotel between eleven and midnight?"

"Very few."

"The police say you assumed that he slipped out in the morning, after five-thirty. Why then, and not before midnight?"

He said the police had simply asked him what time the front door was opened, and it was immediately assumed that that was when he had gone out. Commissar Neumann had reprimanded him for not keeping a more watchful eye. "But how could I watch every movement? Such a thing had never happened before. Neumann is lenient to elderly people and often lets them stay here instead of at the Gestapo. There is never any need to spy on them."

It was quite clear that no proper inquiry into the circumstances of Schweigler's leaving the hotel had been made. Indeed the whole case had been dealt with negligently. The man was dead, they had no idea who he

was and were not interested, and that was the end of it.

I asked to see the bedroom again. It was a small room with a plain bed, clothes cupboard, washstand, and a table covered with a white cloth.

"You have told me he did not sleep in the bed," I reminded him, "but that the coverlet was merely ruffled. Show me how much it was ruffled."

He disarranged the coverlet and pillow slightly, as if someone had thrown themselves on it dressed. "Not more than that," he said, "and here lay the unopened satchel with his night things."

We came downstairs again to the verandah. "Listen, Herr Schober," I said, "the bed was not slept in, the satchel was unopened; after eleven very few people would have been about, and he might have come downstairs unnoticed. On the other hand, after 5.30 a.m. servants were about, it was daylight, and he might easily have been seen. When did he more likely slip out, before midnight or in the morning?"

He agreed that before midnight seemed more probable. "But then," he added, "what would he have done all night?"

"That is another matter."

I had learnt what I wanted to know. But I was interested also in something else.

"You say Commissar Neumann is kind to elderly people. What sort of man is his assistant?"

His face took on a different expression. His attitude stiffened. "Excuse me," he said, "I have something I must attend to." And he disappeared into his office.

Setting out to reconstruct the death, I went to a shop and bought a tape measure, then followed the route Obry

THE SOLUTION

had taken to the railway, working out in my mind his probable movements.

Leaving his belongings behind so as not to be encumbered, he had slipped out before midnight and made in the direction he knew the railway must lie, but not to the station where he might encounter Gestapo men. He followed the line of houses on the hotel side of the square and came to this gateway leading into the park.

It must have been very dark here beneath the trees. Perhaps he sat down on a bench to review his position. During the long talk in Madame Prosser's room after supper—and not on the train as we had wrongly inferred from Madame Prosser's letter—he had confided to her and the Polish gentleman who he really was, and requested her to communicate with his family when she arrived in Paris. Thus, if further accident overtook him, they would know at least that he had been arrested. What possible courses lay open to him now? Suppose he stayed on at Mies. There was the possibility that those who had obtained his false papers for him might also try to secure his release; but there was the greater likelihood that orders would come to send him back to Prague, and then he was done for. He must give his captors the slip before such orders came.

The chances of escape were good. He was robust and in good health. He had a little money in his pocket—nearly ten marks, as I had seen when I examined his things. He had started out from Prague with the regulation ten marks which travellers were allowed to take with them. During the afternoon he had encountered in the vestibule of the Gestapo the woman returning to Prague to whom he had spoken and asked her to take his scribbled message to Haller, "Arrested on account of

papers". From her he had borrowed three marks, to be refunded by Haller. Three marks was not much, but he was grateful for anything in the circumstances, and it was kind of her to do such a service to someone she had never seen before. Thus his capital had risen to thirteen marks. His lunch and supper had cost just over three marks, but to economize during his flight he had saved up half his meals, which were wrapped up in his pocket. So if he felt hungry during the night he had something to go on with. Nine marks and a few pfennigs were not much money, of course, but he had a gold watch that he could sell. He need not fear for lack of money. And, best of all, he still had his railroad ticket to Switzerland. Neumann had taken his passport and frontier permit, but for the rest he had been considerate, he had not searched him, he had not taken away his watch or his money or his ticket. So he must travel without a passport or any other papers of identification, but, once *near* a frontier, couldn't he take a chance on stealing across it secretly, during the next night?

The first thing to do now was to get to the railway and wait until daylight.

He may have strayed long among these zigzag paths, in the dark. They all led down to the river, but unless he took the right one he would not come upon the footbridge. He may have had to wait until dawn to discover the footbridge.

I stopped in the middle of the bridge, estimating the depth of the water. It flowed slowly at this spot. It must be fairly deep. Suicide? . . . Here was his chance—and much less unpleasant than throwing himself under a train, if such an idea ever occurred to him. But *why* kill himself? Why despair? There was no cause for

THE SOLUTION

despair. There was every reason for hope.

I moved on to the far side of the river. Here again there were several paths, and he may have strayed long before coming upon the one that led obliquely in a steep ascent to the narrow tunnel under the railway. It was so steep that steps were cut out in the earth. The high embankment of the line loomed through the trees. In the night, and even early dawn, it would have been invisible, and he could only have known that he had reached the railway when he arrived at the tunnel and clambered through it as I now did. He may have stumbled in the darkness, for the rough path continued to rise, steep and uneven, throughout the fifteen or twenty yards of tunnel. Yet steeper it came out on the upper side until the level of the railway was reached. Here he had stopped, tired out perhaps, and climbing under the railing which extended beyond the end of the bridge, stood leaning against it, as I now did, to rest.

A few paces away was a distance mark with the figures 380-6-615/50—the distance mark mentioned in the protocol. The body, it was therein stated, was found 16½ metres to the west of this. I measured it with the tape measure. It came exactly to the spot the undertaker had shown me.

A whistle sounded in the distance. I moved off the bridge to avoid a passing train. It appeared round the bend travelling about forty kilometres an hour. I watched it as it roared over the little bridge, over the fatal spot. Then I went back and stood leaning against the railing, thinking.

This was where *he* had stood, thinking. The way of escape lay open to him. It was to use the ticket to Basle which he had in his pocket. He must travel nearly to

the Swiss frontier, get off before passports were demanded, and then steal across into Switzerland at night. To swim the Rhine would be a trifle to a man who was a sportsman in good trim. To embark on this plan safely he must walk along to Mies station and board the train there or somewhere beyond, after the Gestapo guards who boarded it at the Czech frontier had got off.

It was an obvious way of escape. Yet his body had been found dead, here on this little bridge. And it had been found lying, front upwards, in a position which suggested to those who discovered it that he had lain down deliberately to allow himself to be run over.

Had he, perhaps, tried to jump on a passing train, slipped, and been thrown off? In that case it would seem that he must be thrown to the side of the railway, whereas he had been found lying on his back more or less at right angles to the line.

I walked up and down the little bridge. Then stopped again at the spot, leaning on the railing, but with my back now to the line, staring down into the gully in which the footpath emerged from the tunnel below. My feet were on the stone edge of the bridge. As I drew up one foot slipped, I felt myself tumbling backwards, but prevented a fall by clutching at the railing. Drawing myself up briskly I thought with a flash: Was that how it happened? If I had fallen, how should I have struck the ground? Quickly I measured the distance from the edge of the bridge to the nearest rail of the line, then lay down in the position in which the dead man had been found, with my head on the rail. My feet protruded an inch or two beyond the edge of the bridge. If I had fallen my head would certainly have struck the rail. I had been told that Obry was about my height though of stouter

THE SOLUTION

build. If, exhausted by the agitation of the previous day and several hours of wandering during the night, he had leant on the railing at that spot to rest, as I had done; if he had momentarily dozed, slipped, and fallen backwards, it was almost a certainty that he would have struck the sharp edge of the rail with the back of his head in the full force of his fall. Could he have survived such a blow? At least he would have been stunned and severely injured. And in that case, lying there unconscious, as I now lay, conscious——

A whistle again shrieked in the distance. It was not comfortable, lying there with my head on the rail, but I had been engrossed with my train of thought. I scrambled to my feet. A few moments later the black bulk of the engine of another train, coming from the other direction, appeared at the western bend. If I had still been lying there, would I have been seen by the engine driver? I watched particularly to see how the driver would be looking out. He was looking out on the other side, the open side, not on this, the high embankment side, where all view was cut off. It was extremely unlikely that he would have been able to see an object lying on the embankment side of the line.

When the train had roared its way out of sight I repeated the experiment several times, leaning on the railing and testing an experimental fall. Beyond all doubt my head would have hit the rail, and it would probably have killed me outright.

"It may not be a conclusive case," I said to myself as I walked back, "but it is sounder than theirs."

On a hot day the low, wide-vaulted ceilings of the Rathaus were a cool refuge. I mounted the stone stair-

case slowly, and stood outside the door of Judge Schwarz. I was not looking forward to this interview as I had sometimes looked forward to encounters that I knew must be combative. Judge Schwarz had struck me as quite particularly unpleasant. And his disposition was not likely to have been sweetened by the challenging message I had sent him through Dr. Toller, threatening to expose his negligence to the great ones of Berlin unless my demand for an exhumation was conceded. So that to come, as I now came, to dispute his verdict in the case, was obviously to court trouble. But it had to be done.

I knocked very nervously, and was ready for any kind of scene—except the one that ensued.

The same clerk announced me, but instead of keeping me waiting the judge himself appeared in the doorway and said: "Please, come in."

He held out his hand. "Good day. Heil Hitler! How can I be of service?" He drew up a chair for me.

I think I must have suppressed a gasp. Was *this* the effect of my threat?

"I come first to thank you for permitting the exhumation," I said quickly, to cement the peace.

He said he was sorry not to have been able to allow an official protocol to be made, but according to law it would have had to be filed together with the written request of the relatives, which I had not been able to produce.

It didn't matter at all, I assured him, thinking of my photographs. And I proceeded to the object of my present visit.

When I said I questioned the verdict of suicide he drew up abruptly for a moment. Nevertheless he listened attentively while I expounded my reasons for believing

THE SOLUTION

that Schweigler had left the hotel not in the early morning, as presumed, but before midnight, with the fixed intent of taking flight. Would a man intending to commit suicide think of saving some of his meals? Or borrow a few marks from a stranger? (I said this stranger was the convenient Madame Prosser.) Besides, between five-thirty and six a.m.—the approximate time the doctor said death must have occurred—there was scarcely time for the deceased to have discovered the bridge over the tunnel, the path to which was not easy to find. “You say he killed himself from fright or despair merely because he seemed agitated. But he had no cause for despair. Agitation was natural without despair. It may not be pleasant to you that he tried once more to give you the slip, but that is the truth.”

When I had described my visit of that morning to the bridge he said: “But you have no proof of your theory of accident.”

“Neither have you of the theory of suicide,” I retorted. “The evidence must be judged on its merits. You agree that my investigation has been more thorough than yours?”

“You had more data. But we cannot modify an official verdict without an official inquiry.”

“That may be. But I wish you to know that I disagree with your verdict and that in London I shall put this on record.”

The interview had not been cordial, but it had been much more peaceful than I anticipated. The judge even thanked me for my visit. “I shall remember it,” he said. What he meant by that I don’t know.

I called in turn on the doctor, the undertaker, and Commissar Neumann to thank them, settle accounts, and

say good-bye. The undertaker insisted on introducing me to his wife and showing me over his dwelling, which was spotlessly clean and liberally decorated with scriptural texts.

Commissar Neumann renewed my frontier permit and congratulated me on my persistence. He agreed that I was probably right about the verdict, but repeated that formally the matter had nothing more to do with him.

I did not see his assistant. There was a large batch of arrested people at the Gestapo that afternoon. I wondered if he was perhaps occupied "at the barracks".

I paid one more visit to the cemetery for a few minutes, then took the train to Prague.

Two kilometres from the station the train thundered over the little bridge. For a single moment, coming round the bend, it was visible from the open side of the line to my straining eyes, and for that moment the driver, had he been specially on the outlook, might perhaps have espied an object lying on the rails. But the times of the early trains made it practically certain that the train which ran over the unconscious body of Alfred Obry had come from the other direction, from which, due to the nearer and inward bend, it would have been quite impossible to see it at all.

I had for a moment questioned the prudence of returning to Prague any more. Suppose Haller had been called to the Gestapo since my departure and had given me and everyone else away? I should probably have heard of this at Mies, but as a measure of precaution I telephoned to Haller from the frontier at Pilsen.

"Is everything all right?"

"Yes."

THE SOLUTION

"Nobody been 'visited'?"

"Nobody."

I went on to Prague. Haller and Cherry, I found, had lived in mortal terror for the first few days after I had gone, expecting hourly a call from the Gestapo. Cherry indeed had spent long hours in church, praying the Virgin Mary to protect him. But as the days passed and nothing happened they recovered confidence.

Cherry and Frau Ludmila were the two people I most wished to see.

Although I was now convinced that Obry had neither committed suicide nor been murdered by the Gestapo "front door", there still remained a faint possibility that my reconstruction of the death was false, and that the Gestapo "back door" had quickly sent to Mies on the afternoon of April 10th, immediately after receipt of the news of Obry's arrest, and organized a decoy, perhaps watching for him to leave the hotel, perhaps (late in the evening when few people were about) inducing him to leave it, promising him safety, then killing him by a blow on the head, and leaving his body on the rails to be run over.

When I rang up Cherry I wondered whether he would come to the telephone. He did, and I was a little surprised at the alacrity with which he accepted my invitation to meet me.

He came without Stepan, who he said was still in hiding, but with his fiancée, and I noted with surprise that they were both obviously very glad to see me. I had expected them to be afraid. I was so struck by this that I asked them why they seemed so pleased.

They looked at each other. Then the young woman said in a curious tone: "You have come from Mies?"

"Yes."

"Did nothing happen to you there?"

"What do you mean, 'happen'? Some accident?"

"Y-yes."

"No. Why?"

Again they looked at each other.

"Did you *stay* at Mies?" asked Cherry.

"No, I stayed with friends at Franzensbad and drove over to Mies every day."

They gave a sort of sigh of relief as though a load had been removed.

"But why?" I asked, mystified.

The young woman thereupon explained, while I listened somewhat sceptically and very amused, that when their Gestapo friends had heard of my visits to Commissar Braun, and that I appeared to have got on good terms with him, they were convinced that I intended to give them away; so they had resolved to do me in, first here in Prague, but when I had suddenly left, and a few days later it was learnt that I was at Mies, the courier was sent to waylay me there. "And we haven't seen him here for a week," she added in a voice that was itself the explanation of their relief at seeing me.

I said I had certainly not seen the courier at Mies.

"They might have had it done by someone else. You are easy to identify, you know."

Seeing me smile sceptically, the young woman went on to say earnestly that after Frau Ludmila had sent the message to Cherry to "go underground", he had gone twice a day to church to pray for his own safety, but when he heard I had gone to Mies he had switched over and prayed for mine!

"I have an important question to ask you," I said. "I

THE SOLUTION

want you to think back carefully and tell me exactly at what time on Easter Monday or Tuesday you or your Gestapo friends first heard of Obry's arrest? "

"It was Haller who first told us," Cherry answered without hesitation, "on the Tuesday, when he got the message from Mies from that stranger woman."

"But the others, the Gestapo men, the ones who forged the papers, didn't they hear of it earlier? "

"They would have told Stepan and me. I don't believe anyone on our side heard of it before Haller told us," he insisted.

"Would you swear to it? "

He crossed himself.

Then, if indeed it was true that the "back door" had heard of the death only after the event, Obry must have died by accident. It was in any case as far as I could get in this inquiry into the disappearance of one out of the thousands of victims of Nazi terror. I rose to leave, wishing my young conspirators happiness. "Will Haller know you have seen us?" Cherry asked rather anxiously. "Not if you don't wish it," I replied. "Please don't tell him," he said.

Their fear of Haller was natural in the circumstances, and yet, as I have said earlier, Haller was not lightly to be condemned. Let any reader ask himself what he might have done, in the conditions of Nazi political terror, when faced with the alternative of sacrificing not only his career but perhaps innocent associates for individuals with whom he had come into contact quite against his will. When I parted from Haller I was genuinely glad to be able to tell him what I believed to be the truth, namely, that he was no longer in danger because the Gestapo would hush up the whole affair, being ashamed to have had it re-

vealed that for several hours they had had in their hands, without knowing it, a man they badly wanted, whose attempted escape had been made possible only by the corruption within their own gates. I am quite sure this is the attitude they did adopt, and that even if I had not effectively camouflaged the figures in this drama no pursuit would be launched against them as a result of it. None of them had done anything against the Nazi regime as such. All they did was get implicated in the flight of a single individual, who as it turned out lost his life in the attempt. And they were all so terrified at the situation that ensued that I am quite certain not one of them would ever get mixed up in anything of the sort again.

It only remained to say good-bye to Frau Ludmila.

I placed on the table before her a white handkerchief which I had received back from the laundry that morning, clean and neatly folded.

"Do you recognize that handkerchief?" I asked her.

She unfolded it and gave me a quick, touching glance.

"Alfred's?" she said, as much by intuition as recognizing one of the things she had bought for him.

"Yes. At the cemetery I took it from the pocket of Friedrich Schweigler."

EPILOGUE

ALFRED OBRY was found. The tangled skein of conflicting data was unravelled. Much of it had been false and some of it garbled. Madame Prosser's message, Haller's evidence, the *Die Zeit* report, the accounts of Cherry and Stepan and the Gestapo "back door", the negotiations with Bergmann, Bock and the Gestapo "front door", the hasty and ill-considered conclusions of the Mies police—all had been misleading, incomplete when true, some of it false. The truth, like most truth, was simple.

My job was done, but, in my own opinion, I had got to the end of the road not by any real ability to tackle problems such as this, but largely by sheer bluff. The most piquant feature of it all, and one which gives me much amused satisfaction in retrospect, is that the position I built up—with others' priceless assistance—was founded mainly on the reputation for being an uncompromising foe of Bolshevism. This was my surest *carte d'entrée* everywhere. It was fortunate that my investigation was concluded before the Russo-German pact was signed!

The first public indication in Germany of that astonishing event appeared in a short official communiqué in the Press on Tuesday, August 22nd, 1939, nine days before the invasion of Poland to which it prepared the way. On that evening I was waiting for a train at the station of Bodenbach, in Sudetenland. The Nazi leaders' portraits, the swastika flags, the common catchwords hackneyed

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

elsewhere in Germany, were still displayed and repeated with the fervour of novelty in this "reclaimed" territory. The propagandist cartoons, the quotations from *Mein Kampf*, the trenchant sayings of Goering and Goebbels with which the walls and waiting-rooms were embellished had here an appeal more poignant than in the surfeited Reich.

One of these catchwords struck me particularly. It was a placard beneath Hitler's portrait with these words:

*Wer Hitler dient, dient Deutschland;
Wer Deutschland dient, dient Gott.*

(Who serves Hitler serves Germany,
Who serves Germany serves God.)

There flashed to my mind a strophe of Goethe:

*Wie einer ist, so ist sein Gott:
Darum ward Gott so oft zu Spott.*

(As a man is, so is his God;
That's why God often seems so odd.)

Just then a boy came running with the evening newspapers. Mechanically I proffered a coin and took the paper without looking at it. Then I heard a gasp. A spectacled man on the bench beside me made a sudden movement, holding his paper to the light unbelievably. "Not possible!" he muttered, and pushed the paper to his companion. I looked down at the sheet in my hand. There was the thunderbolt, spread out in huge red print across the page:

*Non-Aggression Pact with Soviet Russia: von Ribbentrop
To-morrow in Moscow*

EPILOGUE

I looked up again at the drab surroundings of the railway station. Everything seemed different, unreal. There on the wall hung the inevitable portrait of the implacable crusader against Bolshevism, dressed in a trench coat with upturned collar, in one of his defiant attitudes. He seemed to be shouting the familiar slogans: "The Jew-ridden caucus of Moscow! . . . The Bolshevist pest! . . . The modern barbarians, the scum of the earth, the dregs of humanity, the Communists! . . ."

And under the portrait I read again: "Who serves Hitler . . . serves God."

Was the God made in Germany of the Nazis to be harnessed now to the Red chariot of the Bolshevist Anti-christ? Was Hitler's "Almighty", whom he was wont patronizingly to invoke in his speeches, nothing but the "God" of the blasphemous Communist *Godless League*, the "God" of the Soviet anti-God museums, the "God" of the butcher of twenty thousand Russian priests? Or had Stalin perhaps officially "dethroned", "abolished", "liquidated" God merely to offer the post to Hitler under his own patronage?

I clambered into my train and looked around at the other passengers who, with puckered brow and shaking head, scanned the announcement full of perplexity. But nothing was said aloud. The situation would, of course, be accepted. However extraordinary, it would be calmly submitted to, like everything else Hitler and Stalin did. Like the Gestapo, like the OGPU.

When I reached my Dresden hotel I was just in time to hear the last radio news as I ordered a late supper in the garden restaurant. The band ceased to blare and the dancers took their seats in silence as the announcer, in strident tones, proclaimed that Ribbentrop was even then

on his way to Moscow to seal the bond of friendship with the Bolsheviks. I wondered how many of the guests added mentally, "With 'the scum of the earth'?" Far more likely they took refuge in the easy, irresponsible thought: "Let Hitler decide." Prudence as well as habit decreed this. Criticism was a crime. So the band blared again. The couples waltzed round seemingly as if nothing had occurred. Yet not quite as if nothing had occurred. There *was* a subtle change in the atmosphere. Hidden, secret thoughts *had* been stirred, vaguely and perhaps even ominously. But certainly they would find no open expression.

Early next morning I went to a *Kurbad* to have a medicinal bath and massage. On the way I met the doctor, a friend of mine, who was the head of the establishment. "Our Führer has made a pact with the devil," he said in an undertone, looking round to see he was not overheard. He moved quickly away from the shaded archway where we had exchanged a few words and preceded me into the building. When I entered a moment later he turned to me with, "Ah, good morning!" as if he hadn't seen me before. He was afraid that even his own assistants should know he had spoken to me outside.

My old *Bademeister* and masseur, whom I liked very much, was less restrained—but he was a worshipper of the Führer. He was a veteran of the last great war, and though lame, was still powerful and energetic, strong and yet gentle with his hands. I don't think for a moment he would have borne personal resentment against me for being English, but as a precaution I had told him I was Canadian, for he was convinced that the British Empire was on the verge of dissolution, and that if war came all

EPILOGUE

the Dominions would immediately break away from "British tyranny". Thus he regarded me with favour and talked volubly.

"England is wrong, wrong, wrong," he held forth in his usual strain as he rubbed oil into my limbs. "England wants war. She stole all our possessions, she wants to exterminate us, but now she is afraid because she sees the Führer has made Germany great again. She wants to enforce the villainous dictate of Versailles, but because the English are cowards they make others fight for them. But Adolf Hitler cannot be outdone. Adolf Hitler is all-wise, all-powerful. He has frustrated England's evil plottings! The pact with Russia—have you heard about it? Now you will see, England will have to back out. She will leave the Poles in the lurch. The so-called democracies will capitulate. We shall get back Danzig and the Corridor and Silesia without any war. And justly—we only demand what is ours by right. . . ." And so on and so on.

I didn't argue. I loved him to massage me hard, and his excitement made his arms still stronger. Besides, you don't annoy a man at whose mercy you are lying prone and who knows every weak spot in your body! Nevertheless I did gasp in between rubs: "Isn't it a curious friendship, though, Hitler and Stalin?"

I thought I detected a momentary hesitation before he replied: "But England is outmanœuvred—what else matters? The Führer knows what he does. . . . The Führer is always right. . . ."

He handed me over to his assistant to wrap me up in blankets on a couch. This young man was generally silent. But once on an earlier occasion when he was sure the *Bademeister* was out of hearing he had leant over me

and asked: "How are things in Canada? Does it cost very much to get there? Do you think they would let me in?"

I fell asleep and the *Bademeister* waked me. "Did you dream of pretty ladies?"

"No," I said quite truthfully, "I was thinking of a placard I saw which said, 'Who serves Hitler serves Germany, and who serves Germany serves God.' Does that mean that we, outsiders, cannot be serving God?"

The good old fellow looked puzzled.

"That's all 'propaganda'," he said, with much contemptuous emphasis on the word. Then turning away, he added with a bitterness that astonished me: "What a beastly thing politics is!"

In the first three days following the Nazi-Bolshevist pact there was almost a holiday mood. Trippers prepared for the week-end with knapsack and kit. "Strength-through-joy" parties journeyed gaily hither and thither on their organized vacations. The official radio reports of the "panic" caused in London and Paris by the new pact made the people firmly believe that the infallible Führer had pulled off another "white war" and the Polish problem was to be solved "in the German sense" without a blow.

But at the week-end general mobilization, food rationing and travel restriction were announced. The truth clearly proclaimed itself. There was to be a war after all. But it would be, of course, a *Blitzkrieg*. In a week or two the Führer would have "punished" Poland, and there would be peace again. It was utterly inconceivable that Britain and France should fight for a beaten Poland, if at all. It was even more inconceivable—to the Nazified

EPILOGUE

mind—that they should take up arms for a principle, and for so ridiculous and incomprehensible a principle as the rights of small nations.

I knew we would fight, that we must fight, yet I was loth to leave. On the morning of the last pre-war Sunday I was still at Dresden, still undecided, though my German friends themselves were hurrying to their homes. At half-past ten that day I saw off to Berlin a friend departing in haste who reproached me with folly for not climbing into the same train even without my belongings. I did leave later in the day, but had difficulty in reaching Berlin. I had to fight my way on to a train at all. Hundreds of passengers were left on the platforms.

Berlin was transformed. An ominous quiet reigned in its half-deserted streets. I found the frontiers closed, air routes stopped, departure almost impossible. The British Ambassador had flown to London and was at that moment in special session with the cabinet at Downing Street, and I learnt the full gravity of the situation when I lunched next day with our Counsellor, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, and our Military Attaché, in the garden of the Adlon. We had secured a quiet table in a corner—quiet in the intervals between the roaring of squadrons of aeroplanes overhead. The waiters, always well disposed to faithful British customers and certainly deploring the likelihood of losing them, served us anxiously and obligingly.

My companions told me I ought to leave at once. Despite their heavy anxieties they found time to consider my safety and offered me the possibility of escaping that same afternoon by car with the Secretary of the Polish Embassy who was leaving for Copenhagen *en route* for Warsaw via Stockholm. I was very touched by this offer,

but nevertheless declined it. Sir Nevile Henderson was returning from London that night. I wanted to see what the developments would yet be. I arranged to stay and go to the Embassy at midday on Tuesday.

Tuesday morning dawned bright and warm. Having nothing special to do before going round to the Wilhelmstrasse, I took my time about dressing. Suddenly the telephone rang. "British Embassy speaking," and a moment later: "The plane on which the Ambassador returned from London last night is going back this morning and you can go by it. You must be at Tempelhof airport at eleven o'clock. . . ."

I put the receiver down and thought hard for fifteen seconds. Things were evidently approaching the end. As events proved, Germany invaded Poland during Thursday night. I was still loth to leave. I wanted to see the very end. But to refuse this offer would have been madness. I should only have been a severe embarrassment to my friends had I stayed. I was at Tempelhof at eleven o'clock.

The Ambassador's plane was surrounded by a cordon of soldiers and officials, standing silent and respectful. What were they thinking? Not hostile thoughts, I am certain. Dumbly regretful of events, they wanted no war, least of all with Britain.

Our pilot was ordered to take a designated course and fly not higher than five hundred feet. Observation of anything but a limited strip of territory was thus made impossible. The quiet homesteads of German farmers loomed large underneath us, their red-tiled roofs picturesque on the green background. Over the wooded hills we seemed to skim the trees. Two German machines flew behind us to see we kept the course. Watchful anti-

EPILOGUE

aircraft guns would have given us unpleasant warning had we deviated from track or height.

Thus we flew to the stipulated point on the Dutch frontier. But once there, our aeroplane soared rapturously to ten thousand feet. On the North Sea microscopic craft appeared in the blue patches between vast floating islands of fleecy cloud. So small they looked that one picked them out by their white wake. The shimmering waves seemed modelled like sand patterns after a receding tide. In a day or two these waters must deal and conceal death from submarines, torpedoes, mines, invisible nets. This limitless expanse of sky must become the battlefield of a terrible unknown warfare. Watchful guns must beat off monstrous winged invaders approaching our coast exactly as we ourselves now approached it—that thin, yellow, sandy line down there, ten thousand feet below, with its white watery edge.

Looking back, I kept pondering upon the Nazi-Bolshevist pact. It had taken us by surprise only in its suddenness and scope, following upon years of vitriolic abuse and the Führer's reiterated declarations that any form of alliance with Russia must inevitably spell doom for Germany. But was the agreement itself after all so unnatural? I had been studying the resemblances between the Nazi and Bolshevist administrations, and there was plenty of ground for mutual understanding if rivalry was set aside.

The Communist dictatorship of Moscow is the prototype of all totalitarian dictatorships, and upon it in greater or lesser extent all subsequent totalitarian regimes, but particularly that of the Nazis, have been modelled.

One of the most remarkable things about Adolf

Hitler is that he has produced little or nothing that is truly original.

Besides the Gestapo, an exact replica of the Cheka-Ogpu, the Press and propaganda apparatus of both regimes is identical in character. Goebbels indeed might have been a faithful disciple of the Jewish founder of the Comintern, Zinoviev-Apfelbaum. Those acquainted with the style of oratory and argumentation of both Goebbels and Zinoviev cannot but have been struck by their marked resemblance, even in terminology, illustration, and the talent for inventing cheap jibes. True, in 1936 Stalin shot his erstwhile friend and comrade Zinoviev-Apfelbaum, together with many other associates of long standing who refused to toe the zigzag Stalin line. But Hitler likewise has "liquidated" no small number of his closest friends who ventured to oppose him in word or deed, and there is no knowing what may yet befall Goebbels if he fails to shuffle his feet fast enough for Hitler.

In the economic sphere, the Nazi system of far-reaching and ever-increasing Government control of imports and exports, of production and distribution, of private banking accounts, and of prices of the commonest things such as household repairs and automobile parts, approximated even in peace time more and more closely to the system prevailing in Russia. True, Hitler has never officially abolished private property, nor Stalin officially recognized it. But wide deviation from theory on both sides brought them close together, and under war conditions there is little to distinguish them in practice.

Under both regimes education is run on similar principles. It is calculated primarily to prevent the youthful mind from imbibing any but official doctrines. Essential

EPILOGUE

subjects such as history, literature and geography are all given a strong political bias. Dissident teachers and professors are ruthlessly persecuted, and instruction and "culture" are made to serve first and foremost Party ends.

Both Hitler and Stalin claim, with equal injustice, to have established true "socialist" and "labour" Governments. The full title of the Nazi party is the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Hitler openly boasts that he has achieved the Marxist ideal of a classless society.

The systems of "election" and popular "representation" are closely alike. No candidates may be put forward other than those approved by the dominant party, and the voters may only vote affirmatively or abstain.

In consequence, Nazi and Bolshevik "parliaments" resemble each other in nature and function, being devoid of any truly representative character. The Reichstag and the Soviet Union Council are merely audiences convened occasionally to listen to and "ratify" the decisions already taken and acted upon by Hitler and Stalin. These bodies are not even endowed with consultative powers.

In the Red Army, political control is exercised in each unit by commissars and what are called "political guides". Up to 1938 the German Army was independent of such direct political control. But in the spring of that year, after the Bromberg affair, the German Army lost this independence, and although an identical system of political commissars on the Russian model was not introduced, the army became definitely subjected to the political machine.

Hitler's vaunted *Arbeitsdienst*—compulsory labour service—was copied from Bulgaria, where, after the last war, youths were trained to drill with picks and shovels

instead of rifles when the formation of an army was forbidden. But the system of labour training into which the *Arbeitsdienst* has developed is similar to that obtaining in Soviet Russia, and is indeed one of the least objectionable features of both regimes, and would be worthy of imitation by ourselves if shorn of its political colouring. In Russia adolescents are organized in the *Komsomoltsi*—the Young Communists' League. In Germany the corresponding organization is called the Hitler Youth, which every boy and girl must join. At eighteen they go to a labour camp for six months for training in some kind of manual labour relating to agriculture or public works. In Russia talented youths are accredited to the Communist party as "candidates". In Germany they are sent to the Adolf Hitler Schools, also known as the "Napoli" (an abbreviation of the cumbrous word *Nazionalpolitischenerziehungsanstalt*). In each case the aim is to transform the adolescent into a fanatical crusader in the Communist or Nazi cause.

The attitude of both dictators toward religion is similar. Hitler's hatred of Christianity derives from the race of its founder, Stalin's from the militant-atheist nature of Marxist doctrine. By different paths they arrive on common ground, and it is not surprising to find them there proclaiming a common detestation of the democratic principles of liberty and political and social rights which are the ideal of western civilization.

Even in externals Hitler has borrowed practically all the distinctive features of his regime. The Roman salute and his title of "Führer" (*Duce*, Leader) he took from Mussolini. May Day as the proletarian holiday, and the red national flag with a strange unnational device he copied from Russia; and just as the Hammer-and-Sickle

EPILOGUE

(supposedly emblematic of the world proletariat and peasantry, but in Russia referred to in whispers as the hammer of destruction and the sickle of death) answers no chord in the soul of the Russian people, so also it is difficult to find justification for the swastika as a German emblem.

Analogies extend curiously enough even to coincidences. In the opening years of the Russian revolution Bolshevik leadership was represented by a trinity of outstanding figures—Lenin-Trotsky-Zinoviev—which finds its exact counterpart in Hitler-Goering-Goebbels, the rôles and degrees of popularity of each corresponding precisely: Lenin-Hitler, the acknowledged demigods; Trotsky-Goering, field-m Marshals and creators of the army, both tolerably popular; Zinoviev-Goebbels, heads of the propagandist departments and definitely unpopular. In race the analogy fails, for Trotsky and Zinoviev were Jews. (Yet there are not a few in Germany who believe Goebbels to be really of Jewish origin!)

Where Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia must eventually come into conflict is in the contradiction between the hypernationalistic ideals of Hitler and the neo-imperialistic and ultimately world-revolutionary aims of Stalin. Here clash is inevitable. But meanwhile, with slight accommodation on both sides for opportunist purposes, they may, even though jealously watching each other's moves, travel far together in their common hatred of democracy and Christendom.

The distortion of the youthful mind is perhaps the most tragic and ominous result of the working of these two dictatorships. We must take it into grave account. Tendentious education and perverted class doctrines are

bringing into being a generation of fanatical ignoramuses, who, though their frenzy may be abated by defeat, will still remain grossly ill-informed and incompetent to handle the affairs of their time. Yet this growing generation will be the "builders" of the future with whom we shall have chiefly to deal for the next two or three decades. Those would do well to bear this in mind who glibly talk of immediately inviting a de-Hitlered Germany to the round table on a basis of intellectual and social parity to settle the affairs of mankind as a whole.

This was my last, and saddest, impression as I left Germany just before the outbreak of hostilities. When I listened to the Prime Minister's announcement of the declaration of war on the morning of the third of September, my mind flew back to that precise instant just one week earlier. On the previous Sunday, before leaving Dresden, I had stood alone in front of Raphael's Sistine Madonna in the Zwinger Museum of that city. The painting represents, as many will remember, Mary emerging from heaven to show the child Jesus the world, the curtain having been drawn aside by the kindly old Saint Sisto and the beautiful Saint Anna. The picture, framed in an altar, is so placed that it is seen to best advantage on a sunny day toward noon.

The gallery was deserted. There were no visitors on that feverish morning when general mobilization, food rationing and travel restriction had all been announced. I had often seen the picture before, but now it was as if the gentle saints had only just at that moment drawn aside the curtain that the queen of heaven might give her son His first glimpse of the world. The dishevelled infant looks at it aghast. For her part His mother faces the scene calmly, without shrinking. Verily there is need

EPILOGUE

of a saviour, she seems to say, and a strong saviour, no weakling, for against the violent the kingdom of heaven must be saved by violence.

There sprang to my recollection the mounted figure of Good King Wenceslas at Prague, patron saint of the Czech nation, immortalized the world over in Yuletide song. I had seen the Nazi Black Guards, striding arrogantly by, regard the statue with disdain, with hatred, but they had not yet dared to tear it down like the metal doors and railings to make guns with which to shoot the good king's descendants, to whom he is still the symbol of gentleness and valour. Good King Wenceslas is clad in armour. He was a fighter. Gentle in peace—valiant in war.

Was not this the message of the Madonna?

I heard a shout from the square outside and saw a battalion of the Hitler Youth drilling. Once upon a time Germany had Boy Scouts. But Boy Scouts, with their cry of Preparedness for *service to mankind*, could not be tolerated in a Nazi regime. So the Scouts were abolished, and instead the Hitler Youth were taught preparedness for service of a very different order, the negation of the best the Boy Scouts stood for. Marshalled by a Brown Shirt officer they went through their military exercises, and at the halt in deafening unison shouted "Heil Hitler!"

I turned again to the picture. The eyes of the child Jesus seemed to flash with greater fire, a fire of dismay, of anger. It was, of course, only a conceit of my imagination, but for a moment the sunlight seemed to dim, a veil to hide the Madonna and infant. Then, when the raucous cry from the street had subsided, the eyes of both seemed to shine with a new light, and it was as if I heard the

AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

child's voice ring out in tones of scathing wrath: "It were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the depths of the sea." So I came out and looked up at the sun, and felt certain that not only the people of Good King Wenceslas, but indeed all the "children" among nations, will come again into their own if the good fight be fought to the end.

